SERMONS

TO

YOUNG WOMEN,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY JAMES FORDYCE, D.D.

VOLUME I.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

THE corruption of the age is a complaint with many men who contribute to increaſe it. In like manner, the inattention of the people is a complaint with many preachers who are themſelves to blame. A dull diſcourſe naturally produces a liſtleſs audience; there being few hearers who will attend to that by which their hearts are not engaged, or their imaginations entertained. To entertain the imagination principally, were a poor, and indeed a vicious aim in a preacher. To engage the heart, with a view to mend it, ſhould be his grand ambition. Any farther than as it may prove ſome way or other ſubſervient to that, entertainment ſhould never be admitted into a Sermon. There, to ſay the truth, we ſeldom meet with too much of the

latter. Would to God we often met there with more of the former!

The author of the following Diſcourſes was prompted to publiſh them, from an unfeigned regard for the Female Sex; from a fervent zeal for the beſt intereſts of ſociety, on which he believes their diſpoſitions and deportment will ever have a mighty influence; and, laſtly, from a ſecret deſire long felt of trying whether that ſtyle of preaching, which to him appears, upon the whole, adapted to an auditory above the vulgar rank, might ſucceed on a ſubject of this nature; nothing in the kind, that he knows of, having been endeavoured before, in any language. That the attempt was as difficult as it was new, and that this very difficulty was probably the cauſe of its having been hitherto declined, he could not help conſidering at the ſame time; and the conſideration created ſuch a diffidence of ſucceſs, as made him deſi-

rous of concealing himſelf. As to the candour of the public, he entertained no diſtruſt. On that he chearfully relied for every proper allowance, more eſpecially reſpecting ſome ſingularities in the mode of compoſition, upon which he would not have ventured but for the uncommonneſs of the occaſion. Nor has he been diſappointed. But the public has not ſhown candour only: it has even exerciſed indulgence; perſons of both ſexes, of various denominations, and of different taſtes, having joined in expreſſing the moſt generous approbation. The fears that attended the firſt experiment being thus diſpelled, there was no longer any reaſon for ſuppreſſing the writer's name. And indeed it had been in vain, the majority of his readers having immediately diſcovered him.

Their very favourable opinion, ſo far beyond his expectation, affords him pe-

culiar pleaſure, as it raiſes his hopes, that what is here ſuggeſted may, by the bleſſing of Heaven, which he humbly implores, contribute to the improvement of the moſt agreeable part of the creation, and by conſequence both to their own felicity, and that of millions with whom they are now, or may be hereafter, connected. In this caſe, it will add to his happineſs to reflect, that he has rendered the plain voice of Truth acceptable amongſt thoſe who are daily tempted by the ſiren-ſong of Flattery.

The preacher is willing to hope, that women of moſt conditions, and at all ages, may meet with ſome uſeful counſel, or ſome ſalutary hint, ſhould curioſity incite them to look into theſe diſcourſes. Should any of thoſe young perſons in genteel life, to whom they are chiefly addreſſed, deem the reprehenſions they contain too ſevere, or too

indiſcriminate; he can only ſay, that as all were dictated by friendſhip no leſs than by conviction, ſo he wiſhes it to be underſtood, that many were occaſioned by a particular obſervation of thoſe characters and manners which are eſteemed faſhionable amongſt the Young and the Gay of this metropolis. In the Country (a denomination which, as matters are commonly conducted, he can by no means allow to the neighbourhood of London) the contagion of vice and folly, it may be preſumed, is not ſo epidemical. In ſhort, he is perſuaded, that women of worth and ſenſe are to be found every where, but moſt frequently in the calm of retreat, and amidſt the coolneſs of recollection.

31MR64

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SERMON I.

ON

THE IMPORTANCE

OF

THE FEMALE SEX,

ESPECIALLY

THE YOUNGER PART.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON I.

On the Importance of the Female Sex, eſpecially the Younger Part.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I will—that women adorn themſelves in modeſt apparel, with ſhamefacedneſs and ſobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or coſtly array, but (which becometh women profeſſing godlineſs) with good works.

"CAN a maid forget her ornaments, "or a bride her attire?" is the Almighty's queſtion by the mouth of a prophet. Splendid attire and rich ornaments are in many places of ſcripture ſpoken of without cenſure, and in ſome with approbation. "The king's daugh-"ter," ſays the pſalmiſt, "is all glo-"rious within:" he adds, "her clo-

" thing is of wrought gold; ſhe ſhall " be brought unto the king in raiment " of needle-work." The Virtuous Woman is in the Proverbs applauded for " clothing her houſhold with ſcarlet, " and herſelf with ſilk and purple." The Creator has poured unbounded beauty over his works. Witneſs the flowers of the field, celebrated by our Saviour himſelf; witneſs the gems of the mine, mentioned in the Revelation of St. John, as employed to give additional luſtre even to the New Jeruſalem; witneſs, in general, all that wonderful colouring, and thoſe fair proportions, that pleaſe the eye, and amuſe the imagination, with endleſs variety. Who can reſiſt, who indeed ought to reſiſt, the agreeable effect? Surely the Author of Nature does nothing in vain. He ſurely meant, that by beholding her with delight we might be led to copy her with care, and from contemplating the inferior orders of beauty riſe to the admiration of that which is ſupreme.

As he has furniſhed infinite materials for the exerciſe and entertainment, no leſs than for the proviſion and accommodation of man; ſo has he inſpired that genius, and ſupplied thoſe powers, by which they are moulded into form, and heightened into ſplendor. In ſaying this we are warranted by revelation itſelf, where we are expreſsly told, that "the "ſpirit of the Lord filled Bezaleel, Aho-"liab," and others, "with wiſdom, and "underſtanding, and knowledge, to de-"viſe and work all manner of curious "and cunning works of the carver of "wood, the cutter of ſtones, the jeweller, "the engraver, the weaver, the embroi-"derer in blue and in purple, in ſcarlet "and in fine linen." What multitudes are daily employed and comfortably ſupported by theſe and ſuch like ornamental arts, hardly any one is ignorant.

That works of ingenuity and elegance are particularly becoming in your ſex,

and that the ſtudy of them ought to enter into female education as much as poſſible, all, I think, are agreed. In fine, none but the moſt contracted, or the moſt prejudiced, will deny that women may avail themſelves of every decent attraction, that can lead to a ſtate for which they were manifeſtly formed; and that, ſhould they by any neglect of their perſons render themſelves leſs amiable than God has made them, they would ſo far diſappoint the deſign of their creation.

Theſe conſiderations will, I apprehend, be thought more than ſufficient to prove, that the paſſage of St. Paul which I have ſelected for my text is not to be underſtood ſtrictly and abſolutely, where it ſeems to condemn female ornament in general. It was common with the Hebrews to expreſs comparative precepts in a poſitive manner, as might be ſhown from a number of texts. But you are not diſpoſed to doubt it. What then is our

apoſtle's meaning? 'I would exhort, 'and even enjoin chriſtian women, al-'ways to dreſs with decency and mode-'ration; never to go beyond their cir-'cumſtances, nor aſpire above their ſta-'tion, ſo as to preclude or hinder works 'of mercy; not to value themſelves on 'their dreſs, or deſpiſe others more 'meanly habited; in ſhort, never to 'ſpend too much time or thought on the 'embelliſhment of the body, but always 'to prefer the graces of the mind, mo-'deſty, meekneſs, prudence, piety, with 'all virtuous and charitable occupations, 'all beautiful and uſeful accompliſh-'ments ſuited to their rank and condi-'tion. Theſe are the chief ornaments of 'their ſex; theſe will render them truly 'lovely as Women; and as Chriſtians, 'theſe will more peculiarly become them." Such, I conceive, is the doctrine of this divine writer, and of his fellow apoſtle St. Peter on the ſame ſubject; and ſuch, in ſubſtance, was the doctrine of ſome of

the wiſeſt heathens. Give me leave to quote one of them: "It is not gold, "nor emeralds, nor purple, but modeſty, "gravity, and decent deportment, that "can truly adorn a woman." Ah, my fair friends, how attractive and how happy might all of you be, were you effectually perſuaded to form yourſelves on ſuch maxims; and what ſingular pleaſure would it afford the preacher, if by the bleſſing of God he might ſo perſuade you!

Princes, it has been ſaid, and young women, ſeldom hear truth. It is a melancholy conſideration. Flattery you have often heard, and ſometimes, I doubt not, liſtened to. May He hope for your attention, whoſe character forbids him to flatter, and whoſe principles are equally averſe to it? Nothing, I am convinced, can be more pernicious to your beſt intereſts, than the adulation with which you are ſo early and ſo generally entertained. You will not look for it

here. But be not afraid, on the other hand, of the bitterneſs of reproach, or the bluntneſs of incivility. If any thing ſhould appear harſh, be aſſured it proceeds from real regard. We would not willingly offend, we are naturally ſolicitous to pleaſe you; but we dare not promote your pleaſure at the expence of your improvement. To tenderneſs and reſpect you are entitled: but certainly faithful and candid admonition is not incompatible with the latter; and of the former, if I be not miſtaken, it is the trueſt proof.

The Almighty has thrown you upon the protection of our ſex. To yours we are indebted on many accounts. He that abuſes you diſhonours his mother. Virtuous women are the ſweetners, the charm of human life. "A Virtuous "Woman—her price is far above rubies." This is not flattery; it is juſt praiſe: and that every one of you may deſerve ſuch commendation, is my earneſt prayer.

Much, I am ſure, depends on you. And this ſhall be my Firſt Point; to which I will devote the preſent diſcourſe, as a proper foundation for what is to follow. That I thus addreſs you in particular, is principally owing to the idea I have formed of your conſequence.

He that depreciates your ſex is as unkind to ſociety, as he is unjuſt to you. Yet to do ſo in your abſence is, I am ſorry to ſay, too common with many men; with thoſe very men that ſoothe you to your faces, and are dupes to your ſmiles. Is this either manly or fair? Becauſe there are fooliſh and vicious women, does it follow that there are hardly any other? Were ſuch an opinion to prevail generally, what would become of human kind? Were ſo ungracious a ſyſtem once eſtabliſhed, is there not reaſon to fear, it would ſoon grow to be too well founded? The world, we know, is mightily influenced by reputation. Applauſe incites and

animates; contempt has the contrary effect. A concern for character is, from their conſtitution, education, and circumſtances, particularly ſtrong in women; in all but thoſe who, having loſt their native honours, have with them loſt their ſenſe of ſhame; an infamy to which they would have hardly deſcended, had they not firſt ſunk in their own eſtimation.

That admired maxim of heathen antiquity, "Reverence thyſelf," ſeems to me peculiarly proper for a woman. She that does not reverence herſelf muſt not hope to be reſpected by others. I would therefore remind you of your own value. By encouraging you to entertain a juſt eſteem for yourſelves, I would on one hand guard you againſt every thing degrading, and on the other awaken your ambition to act up to the beſt ſtandard of your ſex; to aſpire at every amiable, every noble quality that is adapted to your ſtate, or that can inſure the affection and pre-

ſerve the importance to which you were born. Now this importance is very great, whether we conſider you in your preſent ſingle condition, or as afterwards connected in wedlock.

Conſidering you in your preſent Single condition, I would begin where your duty in ſociety begins, by putting you in mind how deeply your Parents are intereſted in your behaviour. For the ſake of the argument, I ſuppoſe your parents to be alive. Thoſe that have had the misfortune to be early deprived of theirs, are commonly left to the care of ſome friend or guardian, who is underſtood to ſupply their place; and to ſuch my remarks on this head will not be altogether inapplicable. But I muſt likewiſe ſuppoſe that your parents deſerve the name, that they are really concerned for your virtue and welfare.—Great God! are there then any of thy creatures ſo unnatural, as to neglect the culture and happineſs of the

children thou haſt given them? Yes, and worſe than to neglect it. "Be "aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens, at this!" There are beings called Parents, and Chriſtian parents, who are at pains to introduce their unexperienced offspring to folly, to vice, to every practice that can plunge them in miſery!—What, Mothers too, and mothers "profeſſing godlineſs!" Is it poſſible that They can train up the fruit of their womb, their own daughters, to diſhonour and deſtruction? Alas! it is done every day, and paſſes unregarded. There is not perhaps in the whole ſcience of female vanity, female luxury, or female falſhood, a ſingle article that is not taught, and alſo exemplified, by thoſe Chriſtian Mothers, to the poor young creatures whom every dictate of nature, as well as every principle of the goſpel, ſhould engage their parents to bring up in modeſty, ſobriety, and ſimplicity of manners. What words can paint the guilt of ſuch a conduct?

Are you who now hear me bleſt with parents that even in theſe times, and in this metropolis, where all the corruption and futility of theſe times are concentred, diſcover a zeal for your improvement and ſalvation? How thankful ſhould you be for the mighty bleſſing! Would you ſhow that you are thankful? Do nothing to make them unhappy; do all in your power to give them delight. Ah, did you but know how much it is in your power to give them!——But who can deſcribe the tranſports of a breaſt truly parental, on beholding a daughter ſhoot up like ſome fair but modeſt flower, and acquire, day after day, freſh beauty and growing ſweetneſs, ſo as to fill every eye with pleaſure, and every heart with admiration; while, like that ſame flower, ſhe appears unconſcious of her opening charms, and only rejoices in the ſun that chears, and the hand that ſhelters her? In this manner ſhall you, my lovely friend, repay moſt acceptably a

part (you never can repay the whole) of that immenſe debt you owe for all the pains and fears formerly ſuffered, and for all the unutterable anxieties daily experienced, on your account.

Perhaps you are the only daughter, perhaps the only child of your mother, and her a widow. All her cares, all her ſenſations point to you. Of the tenderneſs of a much loved and much lamented huſband you are the ſole remaining pledge. On you ſhe often fixes her earneſt melting eye; with watchful attention ſhe marks the progreſs of your riſing virtues; in every ſoftened feature ſhe fondly traces your father's ſenſe, your father's probity. Something within her whiſpers, you ſhall live to be the prop and comfort of her age, as you are now her companion and friend. Bleſſed Lord, what big emotions ſwell her labouring ſoul! But leſt, by venting them in your company, ſhe ſhould affect you too much,

ſhe ſilently withdraws to pour them forth in tears of rapture; a rapture only augmented by the ſweetly ſad remembrance that mingles with it, while at the ſame time it is exalted and conſecrated doubly by ardent vows to heaven for your preſervation and proſperity. Is there a young woman that can think of this with indifference? Is there a young woman that can reverſe the deſcription, ſuppoſe herſelf the impious creature that could break a widowed mother's heart, and ſupport the thought?

When a daughter, it may be a favourite daughter, turns out unruly, fooliſh, wanton; when ſhe diſobeys her parents, diſgraces her education, diſhonours her ſex, diſappoints the hopes ſhe had raiſed; when ſhe throws herſelf away on a man unworthy of her, or if diſpoſed, yet by his or her ſituation unqualified, to make her happy; what her parents in any of theſe

caſes muſt neceſſarily ſuffer, we may conjecture, they alone can feel.

The world, I know not how, overlooks in our ſex a thouſand irregularities, which it never forgives in yours; ſo that the honour and peace of a family are, in this view, much more dependant on the conduct of daughters than of ſons; and one young lady going aſtray ſhall ſubject her relations to ſuch diſcredit and diſtreſs, as the united good conduct of all her brothers and ſiſters, ſuppoſing them numerous, ſhall ſcarce ever be able to repair. But I preſs not any farther an argument ſo exceedingly plain. We can prognoſticate nothing virtuous, nothing happy, concerning thoſe wretched creatures of either ſex, that do not feel for the ſatisfaction, eaſe, or honour of their parents.

Another and a principal ſource of your importance is the very great and extenſive influence which you, in general, have

with Our ſex. There is in female youth an attraction, which every man of the leaſt ſenſibility muſt perceive. If aſſiſted by beauty, it becomes in the firſt impreſſion irreſiſtible. Your power ſo far we do not affect to conceal. That He who made us meant it thus, is manifeſt from his having attempered our hearts to ſuch emotions. Would to God you knew how to improve this power to its nobleſt ends! We ſhould then rejoice to ſee it increaſed: then indeed it would be increaſed of courſe. Youth and beauty ſet off with ſweetneſs and virtue, capacity and diſcretion—what have not they accompliſhed?

Far be it from me, my fair hearers, to damp your ſpirits, or to wiſh in the leaſt to abridge your triumphs: on the contrary, by aſſiſting you to direct, we would contribute to exalt and extend them. We are always ſorry when we ſee them miſplaced or abuſed; and—I was going to add, there is

nothing more common. To give them their juſt direction, is truly a nice point. Power, from whatever ſource derived, is always in danger of turning the head. It has turned many an old one. What then ſhall become of a young woman, placed on ſuch a precipice? What can balance or preſerve her, but ſobriety and caution, a good providence, and good advice?

There are few young women who do not appear agreeable in the eyes of ſome men. And what might not be done by the greater part of you to ſecure ſolid eſteem, and to promote general reformation, among our ſex? Are ſuch objects unworthy of your purſuit? or will ye ſay, that thoſe which frequently engage it are of ſuperior or equal importance?

If men diſcover that you ſtudy to captivate them by an outſide only, or by little frivolous arts, there are, it muſt be confeſſed, many of them who will rejoice at

the diſcovery; and while they themſelves ſeem taken by the lure, they will endeavour in reality to make you their prey. Some more ſentimental ſpirits, who might be dazzled in the beginning, will be ſoon diſabuſed; and a few more honourable characters will ſcorn to take advantage of your folly. Folly moſt undoubtedly it is, by a wrong application of your force, to loſe the ſubſtance for the ſhadow.

Now and then a giddy youth may be caught. But what is the ſhallow admiration of an hundred ſuch, or the ſmooth addreſs of artful deſtroyers, to the heartfelt reſpect of men of worth and diſcernment, or the well-earned praiſe of reclaiming were it but one offender? I verily believe you might reclaim a multitude. I can hardly conceive that any man would be able to withſtand the ſoft perſuaſion of your words, but chiefly of your looks and actions, habitually exerted on the ſide of goodneſs.

"Were Virtue," ſaid an ancient philoſopher, "to appear amongſt men in "viſible ſhape, what vehement deſires "would ſhe enkindle!" Virtue exhibited without affectation by a lovely young perſon, of improved underſtanding and gentle manners, may be ſaid to appear with the moſt alluring aſpect, ſurrounded by the Graces; and that breaſt muſt be cold indeed which does not take fire at the ſight!

The influence of the ſexes is, no doubt, reciprocal; but I muſt ever be of opinion, that yours is the greateſt. How often have I ſeen a company of men who were diſpoſed to be riotous, checked all at once into decency by the accidental entrance of an amiable woman; while her good ſenſe and obliging deportment charmed them into at leaſt a temporary conviction, that there is nothing ſo beautiful as female excellence, nothing ſo delightful as female converſation in its beſt form!

Were ſuch conviction frequently repeated, (and it would be frequently repeated, if ſuch excellence and ſuch converſation were more general) what might we not expect from it at laſt? In the mean time, it were eaſy to point out inſtances of the moſt evident reformation wrought on particular men, by their having happily conceived a paſſion for virtuous women: but among the leaſt valuable of your ſex, when have you known any that were amended by the ſociety or example of the better part of ours?

To form the manners of men various cauſes contribute; but nothing, I apprehend, ſo much as the turn of the women with whom they converſe. Thoſe who are moſt converſant with women of virtue and underſtanding will be always found the moſt amiable characters, other circumſtances being ſuppoſed alike. Such ſociety, beyond every thing elſe, rubs off the corners that give many of our ſex an un-

gracious roughneſs. It produces a poliſh more perfect, and more pleaſing, than that which is received from a general commerce with the world. This laſt is often ſpecious, but commonly ſuperficial. The other is the reſult of gentler feelings, and a more elegant humanity: the heart itſelf is moulded; habits of undiſſembled courteſy are formed; a certain flowing urbanity is acquired; violent paſſions, raſh oaths, coarſe jeſts, indelicate language of every kind, are precluded and diſreliſhed. Underſtanding and virtue, by being often contemplated in the moſt engaging lights, have a ſort of aſſimilating power. I do not mean, that the men I ſpeak of will become feminine; but their ſentiments and deportment will contract a grace. Their principles will have nothing ferocious or forbidding; their affections will be chaſte and ſoothing at the ſame inſtant. In their caſe the Gentleman, the Man of worth, the Chriſtian, will all melt inſenſibly and

ſweetly into one another. How agreeable the compoſition! In the ſame way too, honourable love is inſpired and cheriſhed. —Honourable love! that great preſervative of purity, that powerful ſoftener of the fierceſt ſpirit, that mighty improver of the rudeſt carriage, that all-ſubduing, yet all-exalting principle of the human breaſt, which humbles the proud, and bends the ſtubborn, yet fills with lofty conceptions, and animates with a fortitude that nothing can conquer—what ſhall I ſay more?—which converts the ſavage into a man, and lifts the man into a hero! What a happy change ſhould we behold in the minds, the morals, and the demeanour of our youth, were this charming paſſion to take place of that falſe and vicious gallantry which gains ground amongſt us every day, to the diſgrace of our country, to the diſcouragement of holy wedlock, to the deſtruction of health, fortune, decency, refinement, rectitude of mind, and dignity of manners! For my

part, I deſpair of ſeeing the effeminate, trifling, and diſſolute character of the age reformed, ſo long as this kind of gallantry is the mode. But it will be the mode, ſo long as the preſent faſhionable ſyſtem of Female Education continues.

Parents now a days almoſt univerſally, down to the loweſt tradeſman, or mechanic, who to ape his ſuperiors ſtrains himſelf beyond his circumſtances, ſend their daughters to Boarding-ſchools. And what do they moſtly learn there? I ſay, Moſtly; for there are exceptions, and ſuch as do the Miſtreſſes real honour. Need I mention that, making allowance for thoſe exceptions, they learn chiefly to dreſs, to dance, to ſpeak bad French, to prattle much nonſenſe, to practiſe I know not how many pert conceited airs, and in conſequence of all to conclude themſelves Accompliſhed Women? I ſay nothing here of the alarming ſuggeſtions I have heard as to the corruption of their morals. Thus

prepared they come forth into the world. Their parents, naturally partial, fancy them to be every thing that is fine, and are impatient to ſhow them, or, according to the faſhionable phraſe, to let them ſee Company; by which is chiefly meant exhibiting them in public places. Thither at leaſt many of them are conducted. They have youth, and perhaps beauty. The effect of both is heightened by all poſſible means, at an expence frequently felt for a long time after. They are intoxicated by ſo many things concurring to deprive them of their little ſenſes. Gazers and flatterers they meet with every where. All is romance and diſtraction, the extravagance of vanity, and the rage of conqueſt. They think of nothing that is domeſtic or rational. Alas! they were never taught it. How to appear abroad with the greateſt advantage, is the main concern. In ſubſerviency to that, as well as from the general love of amuſement, Parties of Pleaſure, as they are called,

become the prevailing demand. The ſame diſpoſitions on the ſide of the men, ſometimes ſtimulated by the worſt deſigns, often ſeconded by good nature, and not ſeldom perhaps puſhed on by the fear of appearing leſs generous or leſs gallant, prompt them to keep pace with all this folly. They are ſoon fired in the chace; every thing is gay and glittering; prudence appears too cold a monitor; gravity is deemed ſevere; the Ladies muſt be pleaſed; mirth and diverſion are all in all. The phantoms paſs: the female adventurers muſt return home; it is needleſs to ſay, with what impreſſions. The young gentlemen are not always under equal reſtraint; their blood boils; the tavern, the ſtreets, the ſtews, eke out the evening; riot and madneſs conclude the ſcene: or if this ſhould be prevented, it is not difficult to imagine the diſſipation that muſt naturally grow out of thoſe idle gallantries often repeated. Nor ſhall we be ſurpriſed to find the majority of our

youth ſo inſignificant, and ſo profligate; when to theſe we join the influence of bad or giddy women grown up, the infection of the moſt peſtilent books, and the pattern of veterans in ſin, who are ever zealous to diſplay the ſuperiority of their talents by the number of their diſciples, and ſecretly ſolicitous by the ſtrength of their party to make amends for the weakneſs of their cauſe.

That men are ſometimes dreadfully ſucceſsful in corrupting the women, cannot be denied. But do women on the other ſide never corrupt the men? I ſpeak not at preſent of thoſe abandoned creatures that are the viſible ruin of ſo many of our unhappy youth; but I muſt take the liberty to ſay that, amongſt a number of your ſex who are not ſunk ſo low, there is a forwardneſs, a levity of look converſation and demeanour, unſpeakably hurtful to young men. Their reverence for female virtue it in a great meaſure de-

ſtroys; it even tempts them to ſuſpect that the whole is a pretence, that the ſex are all of a piece. The conſequences of this, with regard to their behaviour while they remain ſingle, the prejudices it muſt neceſſarily produce againſt marriage, and the wild work it is likely to make if they ever enter into that ſtate, I leave you to imagine.

Hitherto I have ſpoken only of the intereſt young women have with our ſex. Let me now ſay ſomething of that which they have with their Own. It is not perhaps ſo extenſive as the other; but for obvious reaſons it cannot be inconſiderable. Do they always uſe it to good purpoſes? Do they never corrupt one another? Do none of them aſſiſt the common enemy; thoſe wicked and deſigning men that are combined againſt the ſex, eſpecially againſt the innocent and unwary? Do the old never initiate the young in thoſe low arts of diſſimulation and cunning, which a

wiſe woman cannot want, and which a worthy woman will not practiſe? Do the young—But I haſten from ſo painful a topic, to conſider the Importance of your ſex in another light. As you have certainly great influence at preſent, ſo,

In the next place, it may be probably in your power to communicate much happineſs, or to occaſion much miſery hereafter. I think now of the chances you have to be connected in Wedlock. Theſe it is impoſſible to calculate: but there are not, I ſuppoſe, many young women who, at one time or another, unleſs they themſelves be in fault, may not form that connexion with the uſual proſpects; and I ſay, that the men you marry, the children you bring, and the community at large, will be all deeply intereſted in your conduct.

As to the firſt, I am not ignorant that there are ſome men ſo groſsly inſenſible, as

to be for the moſt part little or nothing affected by the temper or behaviour of their wives; provided only they do not ruin their affairs. And in truth, if thoſe wives be ill tempered or ill behaved, ſuch want of feeling is ſo far well for the huſbands. If otherwiſe, how much are they themſelves objects of compaſſion, thus condemned to drag a wretched life with beings, on whom all their endeavours to delight are loſt! How ſenſibly muſt ſuch a ſituation pain a delicate and ingenuous mind! What can reconcile her to it, but the ſtrongeſt principles of religion?

Some ſordid or ſaturnine ſpirits of either ſex there may be, who can ſupport a connexion of this kind with a ſtupid indifference; plodding along through a taſteleſs exiſtence, without attachment or gratitude, deſire or hope. Whether the caſe be very common, I leave others to decide. Of both ſexes there are certainly many who are not made of ſuch dull

materials. With reſpect to them—— But ſurely it cannot be neceſſary to diſplay the felicity, or the wo, which muſt unavoidably ariſe to them from their partners. Here indeed, as in moſt inſtances where the modes of life happen to influence, it muſt be allowed the men have the advantage. If they find themſelves unequally yoked, they are generally furniſhed with various means of beguiling their wretchedneſs at a diſtance from home; whereas, if ſuch be the fate of the poor women, they are commonly left to pine away in ſolitary miſery. For them ſcarce any allowance is made; to them little or no pity is ſhown: while the former make themſelves judges in their own cauſe, and the partial world is ready to ſide with them. But yet, if the uſages of that leave them often more room to elude the ideas of domeſtic diſtreſs, the feelings of nature will never ſuffer them fairly to eſcape it. A woman, it is certain, if ſhe be ſo minded, has ſtill the

power of plaguing her partner out of every real enjoyment;—a power however, of which nothing can juſtify the exerciſe, and which when exerciſed is, like every other act of tyranny, ſure to recoil upon the tyrant.

It is natural for me to wiſh well to my own ſex; and therefore you will not wonder, if I be ſolicitous for your poſſeſſing every quality that can render you agreeable companions in a relation which of all others is the moſt intimate, ſhould be the moſt endearing, and muſt be the happieſt or the worſt. But to this ſolicitude my friendſhip for you is at leaſt an equal motive. Were the lower ſprings of ſelf-love to have no effect on your conduct, I muſt yet think, that the more refined principles of generoſity and goodneſs ought to prompt it. Ah! my young friends, what pleaſure can be compared to that of conferring felicity? What honour can be enjoyed by your ſex,

equal to that of ſhowing yourſelves every way worthy of a virtuous tenderneſs from ours? What can be conceived ſo properly female as inſpiring, improving, and continuing ſuch a tenderneſs, in all its charming extent? Contraſted with this, how unamiable, and how miſerable, muſt we pronounce the paſſion for ungentle command, for petulant dominion, ſo ſhamefully indulged by ſome women as ſoon as they find a man in their power!

But laſtly, let us ſuppoſe you Mothers; a character which, in due time, many of you will ſuſtain. How does your importance riſe! A few years elapſed, and I pleaſe myſelf with the proſpect of ſeeing you, my honoured auditreſs, ſurrounded with a family of your own, dividing with the partner of your heart the anxious, yet delightful labour, of training your common offspring to virtue and ſociety, to religion and immortality; while, by thus dividing it, you leave him more at leiſure to plan

and provide for you all; a taſk, which he proſecutes with tenfold alacrity, when he reflects on the beloved objects of it, and finds all his toils both ſoothed and rewarded by the wiſdom and ſweetneſs of your deportment to him and to his children.

I think I behold you, while he is otherwiſe neceſſarily engaged, caſting your fond maternal regards round and round through the pretty ſmiling circle; not barely to ſupply their bodily wants, but chiefly to watch the gradual openings of their minds, and to ſtudy the turns of their various tempers, that you may "teach the young "idea how to ſhoot," and lead their paſſions by taking hold of their hearts. I admire the happy mixture of affection and ſkill which you diſplay in aſſiſting Nature, not forcing her; in directing the underſtanding, not hurrying it; in exerciſing without wearying the memory, and in moulding the behaviour without con-

ſtraint. I obſerve you prudently overlooking a thouſand childiſh follies. You forgive any thing but falſhood or obſtinacy: you commend as often as you can: you reprove only when you muſt; and then you do it to purpoſe, with moderation and temper, but with ſolemnity and firmneſs, till you have carried your point. You are at pains to excite honeſt emulation: you take care to avoid every appearance of partiality; to convince your dear charge, that they are all dear to you, that ſuperior merit alone can entitle to ſuperior favour, that you will deny to none of them what is proper, but that the kindeſt and moſt ſubmiſſive will be always preferred. At times, you even partake in their innocent amuſements, as if one of them; that they may love you as their friend, while they revere you as their parent. In graver hours, you inſinuate knowledge and piety by your converſation and example, rather than by formal lectures and awful admonitions. And finally, to ſecure as far as

poſſible the ſucceſs of all, you dedicate them daily to God, with the moſt fervent ſupplications for his bleſſing.——Thus you ſhow yourſelf a conſcientious and a judicious mother at the ſame moment; and in that light I view you with veneration. I honour you as ſuſtaining a truly glorious character on the great theatre of humanity. Of the part you have acted I look forward to the conſequences, direct and collateral, future and remote. Thoſe lovely plants which you have reared I ſee ſpreading, and ſtill ſpreading, from houſe to houſe, from family to family, with a rich increaſe of fruit. I ſee you diffuſing virtue and happineſs through the human race; I ſee generations yet unborn riſing up to call you Bleſſed! I worſhip that Providence which has deſtined you for ſuch uſefulneſs, for ſuch felicity. I pity the man that is not charmed with the image of ſo much excellence; an image which, in one degree or another, has been realized by many women of

worth and underſtanding in every age: I will add, an image which, when realized, cannot fail of being contemplated with peculiar delight by all the benevolent ſpirits of heaven, with the Father and Saviour of the world at their head! And are there, amongſt the ſons of men, any that will preſume to depreciate ſuch women, to ſpeak of them with an air of ſuperiority, or to ſuggeſt that your ſex are not capable of filling the more important ſpheres of life?

To quote the words of an old writer; "All mankind is the pupil and diſciple "of female inſtitution: the daughters "till they write women, and the ſons "till the firſt ſeven years be paſt; the "time when the mind is moſt ductile, "and prepared to receive impreſſion, be-"ing wholly in the care and conduct of "the mother." Alas! my fair countrywomen, why are not more of you ſtruck with ſuch conſiderations? Why, ye

daughters of Britain, are ſo many of you inſenſible to thoſe brighteſt glories of your ſex? Where is your love for your native country, which, by thus excelling, you might ſo nobly ſerve? where your emulation of thoſe Heroic Women, that have in ancient days graced this happy land? How long will you be ambitious of ſlaunting in French attire, of fluttering about with the levity of that fantaſtic people? When will you be ſatisfied with the ſimplicity of elegance, and the gracefulneſs of modeſty, ſo becoming in a nation like this, ſupported by trade, poliſhed by taſte, and enlightened by true religion? Say, when will you relinquiſh deluſive purſuits, and dangerous pleaſures, the gaze of fools, and the flattery of libertines, for the peaceful and ſolid ſtudy of whatever can adorn your nature, do honour to your country, reflect credit on your profeſſion of chriſtianity, give joy to all your connexions, and confer dignity on Womankind?

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SERMON II.

ON

MODESTY

OF

APPAREL.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON II.

On Modeſty of Apparel.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themſelves in Modeſt Apparel.

LET me recall the attention of my female friends to a ſubject that concerns them highly. I hope that hitherto I have ſaid nothing unkind. I would not rob your ſex of a ſingle advantage they poſſeſs from nature, providence, or legitimate cuſtom. I would not rob you of the ſmalleſt ornament that Judgment has put on, that Prudence allows, or that Decency warrants. On the contrary, I would willingly add to your allurements: I want to ſee you yet more engaging, to ſee you ſtill more completely adorned,

Superfluous, unbecoming, and unavailing decorations, it is true, I would perſuade you to renounce; but it ſhould be only in order to make room for ſuch as will improve beauty where found, or ſupply its place where wanting.

Your conſequence in the creation I fear not to acknowledge: I feel it all. You have already heard me aſſert it. I will aſſert it ever, by pleading your cauſe againſt ignorance, prejudice, and malice. Only take care, my dear clients, not to hurt it yourſelves. Remember how tender a thing a woman's reputation is; how hard to preſerve, and when loſt how impoſſible to recover; how frail many, and how dangerous moſt, of the gifts you have received; what miſery and what ſhame have been often occaſioned by abuſing them! I tremble for your ſituation. Suffer me again to put you on your guard. My text, you have ſeen, has nothing in it really ſevere: St. Paul is, in fact, a better

friend to women than has been commonly ſuppoſed: he ſeems to have underſtood perfectly what became them, and to have conſulted their intereſts more truly than the moſt paſſionate of their admirers. While theſe, by corrupting or miſleading you, whether with or without deſign, would leſſen your influence, and obſtruct your felicity; he would effectually contribute to both, by inculcating every thing that can make you at once more amiable and more happy.

What I am now to offer will turn on the ornament he firſt mentions. "I will— "that women adorn themſelves in Mo- "deſt Apparel"—in Modeſt Apparel, as oppoſed to that which is Indecent, and to that which is Vain: diſtinctions, whereof the theory, I muſt confeſs, it is in many caſes not eaſy, and in ſome perhaps not practicable, to ſettle with preciſion; ſuch a powerful influence in thoſe matters have cuſtom and the opinion of the world.

But in this inſtance, as in others where the paſſions are concerned, the ſtricteſt caſuiſt will, I preſume, be generally the ſafeſt. The zeal of the ancient Fathers on ſuch ſubjects carried ſome of them far; farther, I doubt, than the relaxation of modern manners would well bear. Were a young woman now a days, from a peculiar ſenſe of the ſacredneſs and refinement of female virtue, to appear with any very ſingular ſeverity in her dreſs, ſhe would hardly, I fear, eſcape the charge of affectation; a charge, which every prudent woman will avoid as much as poſſible. But let the licence of the age be what it will, I muſt needs think that, according to every rule of duty and decorum, there ought ever to be a manifeſt difference between the attire of a Virtuous Woman, and that of one who has renounced every title to the honourable name. It were indelicate, it is unneceſſary, to explain this difference. In ſome reſpects, it is ſufficiently diſcerned by the eye of the

public; though, I am ſorry to ſay, not ſufficiently attended to by the generality of women themſelves. If, in other reſpects, it be not ſeen, or do not ſtrike; the cauſe, I apprehend, muſt be that declenſion from the ſtrictneſs of morals, which was hinted at a moment before; a declenſion that would have ſhocked pagans themſelves, in the pureſt ſtate of ancient manners, when proſtitutes were compelled to wear a particular garb, by which they were diſtinguiſhed from women of virtue.

But to enter more particularly into this firſt point of Modeſt Apparel, as oppoſed to that which a chriſtian woman ſhould hold Indecent.

Image to yourſelves a circle compoſed only of people who are not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt, nor in any circumſtance afraid to act on that great maxim of our apoſtle, "Be not conformed to this

" world; but be ye transformed by the " renewing of your minds." At the ſame time, let them have all the candour and charity, which the moſt charitable religion that was ever known can inſpire. And now ſuppoſe, that a young lady dreſſed up to the height of the preſent faſhion, but a ſtranger to moſt of them, drops into their company. In what light, do ye conceive, the manner of her dreſs would probably appear? The laws of chriſtian candour would naturally prevent them from ſeeing her character in a bad light on that account, and would unqueſtionably incline them to hope the beſt. But can ye believe that they would approve, or juſtify, the extreme gaiety and looſeneſs of her attire? Suppoſe however, that her converſation diſcovered a good underſtanding, and that her behaviour had not the leaſt tincture of that levity with which ſhe ſeemed decked out; that, on the contrary, every part of both was wholly unlike it (a conjunction by

no means impoſſible;) could they forbear, in that caſe, to lament the tyranny of the mode, or to regret that a daughter of Wiſdom ſhould, notwithſtanding her ſuperior deſcent and noble pretenſions, be decorated like the daughters of Folly? But whoſe judgment, I beſeech you, would a young woman, ambitious of regulating her appearance, as well as her diſpoſitions and deportment, on the pureſt ſtandard, prefer; that of ſuch perſons as I have juſt deſcribed; or that of thoſe who either never regarded the precepts and ſpirit of chriſtianity at all, or who, profeſſing ſome faint reſpect for them, yet ſcruple not to ſink them in the ſpirit and maxims of the world?

Let us put another caſe, and ſuppoſe a young lady educated by a mother, who to the beſt ſenſe and trueſt breeding joined the utmoſt reverence for religion, and the tendereſt concern for the ſoul of her child;

qualities which, for the honour of your ſex, I hope you will not pronounce incompatible. Let this accompliſhed parent beſtow upon her daughter a culture worthy of herſelf; inſtructing her in every thing that can become the Female and the Chriſtian character; among the reſt, recommending a lovely Modeſty and graceful Simplicity of Apparel, and enforcing all by an example equally unexceptionable and pleaſing. Suppoſe the daughter to improve theſe uncommon advantages (for uncommon, I fear, they are) with the ſtricteſt care and attention. In what light do ye conceive the very free mode of dreſs, ſo generally affected by the ſex at preſent, would appear to her? I am far from thinking ſhe would aſſume the airs of ſanctimonious prudery, or indulge the ſtyle of ſupercilious cenſure; things totally different from the form of education we have figured her to receive. But would ſhe admire that mode in others? Would ſhe copy it herſelf? or would ſhe wiſh

her companions to copy it? Would ſhe chooſe to be intimate with thoſe young ladies that ſeize every opportunity of exhibiting their charms to the public, and vie with one another who ſhall moſt liberally diſplay what her honoured mother taught her more decently to veil?

Is the mode then in queſtion to be conſidered as inconſiſtent with the character of a Virtuous Woman? By no means. May not diſpoſitions the moſt unchaſte often hide under the maſk of an attire the moſt modeſt? Who can doubt it? But what follows? That ſuch attire is not the propereſt covering of Virtue, or what, if left to purſue undiſturbed the dictates of delicacy and prudence, ſhe would not readily fly to in a ſtate of civilized ſociety? Will any one ſay, that they who decline it, beſt conſult either their ſafety, or their reputation amongſt the wiſe; that they, who run into all the latitudes allowed by the wantonneſs of faſhion, are ſufficiently

watchful againſt temptation themſelves, or ſufficiently careful not to throw it in the way of others; that beauty may be as ſecure when moſt expoſed, as when leaſt ſo; or finally, that inſtead of "abſtaining from all appearance of evil," according to the doctrine of a religion which requires the ſevereſt vigilance, every appearance of evil may be admitted, in compliance with the practice of a world, where vice ſteals upon unwary mortals by perſuading them to part with their out-guards?

Thus far have we argued for Modeſty of Apparel, in oppoſition to its contrary, upon the general principles of propriety and reputation, of morality and religion. She, to whom theſe principles are familiar, and in whom the feelings that ariſe out of them are not blunted by too frequent intercourſe with the faſhionable and the gay, will on this article carry about with her a kind of living ſtandard, which ſhe will be enabled to apply to particular

occaſions, with a degree of diſcretion that no rules of ours can teach; and ſuch a one will perceive in our apoſtle's precept a juſtneſs and ſolidity, of which we do not expect that any ſpeculation of ours ſhould thoroughly convince you, without the concurrence of a virtuous ſenſibility on your part.

To what has been ſaid in favour of Modeſt Apparel under this head, I muſt not forget to add, that it is a powerful attractive to Honourable love. The male heart is a ſtudy, in which your ſex are ſuppoſed to be a good deal converſant. Yet in this ſtudy, you muſt give me leave to ſay, many of them ſeem to me but indifferent proficients. To gain men's affections, women in general are naturally deſirous. They need not deny, they cannot conceal it. The ſexes were made for each other. We wiſh for a place in your hearts: why ſhould not you wiſh for one in ours? But how much are you

deceived, my fair friends, if you dream of taking that fort by ſtorm! When you ſhow a ſweet ſolicitude to pleaſe by every decent, gentle, unaffected attraction; we are ſoothed, we are ſubdued, we yield ourſelves your willing captives. But if at any time by a forward appearance you betray a confidence in your charms, and by throwing them out upon us all at once you ſeem reſolved, as it were, to force our admiration; that moment we are on our guard, and your aſſaults are vain, provided at leaſt we have any ſpirit or ſentiment. In reality, they who have very little of either, I might have ſaid they who have none, even the ſillieſt, even the looſeſt men ſhall in a ſober mood be taken with the baſhful air, and reſerved dreſs, of an amiable young woman, infinitely more than they ever were with all the open blaze of laboured beauty, and arrogant claims of undiſguiſed allurement; the human heart, in its better ſenſations, being ſtill formed to the love of virtue.

Let me add, that the human imagination hates to be confined. We are never highly delighted, where ſomething is not left us to fancy. This laſt obſervation holds true throughout all nature, and all art. But when I ſpeak of theſe, I muſt ſubjoin, that Art being agreeable no farther than as it is conformed to Nature, the one will not be wanted in the caſe before us, if the other be allowed its full influence. What I mean is this; that ſuppoſing a young lady to be deeply poſſeſſed with a regard for "whatſoever things are pure, venerable, "and of a good report," it will lead to decorum ſpontaneouſly, and flow with unſtudied propriety through every part of her attire and demeanour. Let it be likewiſe added, that Simplicity, the inſeparable companion both of genuine grace, and of real modeſty, if it do not always ſtrike at firſt (of which it ſeldom fails) is ſure however, when it does ſtrike, to produce the deepeſt and moſt permanent im-

preſſions: which brings me by an eaſy tranſition to

The ſecond part of the preſent conſideration, that of Modeſt Apparel, as oppoſed to what may be ſtyled Vain. I can never think of this, without recollecting in general (for who can remember the particulars of) the catalogue given by the prophet Iſaiah of the various implements and inſtruments of dreſs, uſed by the daughters of Zion in his time. Iſaiah is by all acknowledged the Prince of the Prophets, in an evangelical view: yet he did not deem it beneath the dignity of his commiſſion, to deſcend into the moſt minute detail on ſuch a ſubject; a circumſtance which, it is hoped, may ſoften the ſeverity of cenſure againſt the preacher of this hour, if the ſpirit of criticiſm, or the ſpirit of ſcrupuloſity, ſhould be diſpoſed to condemn his well meant endeavour. The paſſage I now refer to is in the third chapter of Iſaiah, towards the end, where

the prophet having, in the name of God, complained of the pride and wantonneſs of thoſe eaſtern females, and threatened them with diſeaſe and infamy on that account, goes on to mention "the bravery of "their tinkling ornaments about their "feet, and their cauls, and their round "tires like the moon; the chains, and "the bracelets, and the mufflers; the "bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs; "and the head-bands, and the tablets, "and the ear-rings; the rings and noſe-"jewels; the changeable ſuits of appa-"rel, and the mantles, and the wim-"ples, and the criſping pins; the glaſſes, "and the fine linen, and the hoods, and "the veils." On the firſt reading of this catalogue, it muſt be owned, one can ſcarce forbear to ſmile. But to thoſe unhappy women who gave occaſion for it, nothing, alas! could be more ſerious, if you attend to the denunciations which both precede and follow it. I leave you to peruſe them at your leiſure. They are in

the ſtyle of the country and age in which they were uttered. I am ſure they convey a loud leſſon to this. Whether the daughters of our Zion, in the preſent very polite generation, and eſpecially in this moſt polite city, do or do not outſtrip thoſe Jewiſh ladies of old, we cannot take upon us to determine. But were we inclined to indulge a vein of ridicule on female folly, here methinks we might have ample ſcope. We are not inclined to indulge it. We reflect on theſe things with real concern; and with the utmoſt ſerioufneſs conjure our countrywomen to reform whatever is indecent, and to retrench whatever is exorbitant, in their attire.

That there are ſtations and circumſtances, in which ſplendor of dreſs is perfectly allowable, nay extremely proper, none, I think, but the narroweſt minds, will deny. For my own part, I freely acknowledge that I love to ſee a woman

genteelly habited, if her ſituation admit of it. In truth, ſplendor without gentility, as well in this as in every other article where ornament is concerned, will ever ſeem poor and inſipid to all but untaught and vulgar ſpirits; whereas, on the other ſide, it is certain, that the latter may very well ſubſiſt without the former; nor is its effect ever felt more ſtrongly, or more happily, than when it receives no aſſiſtance from the other, but reſults ſolely from our perceptions of elegant ſimplicity. I ſay Elegant Simplicity; an object, which appears to me deſerving of more attention than is commonly paid it by your ſex.

In affairs of this kind, it is but juſt to allow to women a degree of curioſity and care, which the laws of good ſenſe, ſound philoſophy, and maſculine virtue, refuſe to men: a diſtinction ſo true, ſo univerſal, and ſo palpable, that thoſe of the laſt, who betray a particular ſolicitude in adorning their perſons beyond cleanlineſs

and a certain graceful eaſe, ſeldom fail to make themſelves little, in the eyes of every man who is not himſelf effeminate, and of every woman too who is not a ſlave to faſhion. How contemptible many of our young men muſt neceſſarily appear to ſuch, it is not eaſy to expreſs. But of ſeeing them become truly Men in this inſtance, any more than in others that might be named, I deſpair; while ſo many of our young women give ſo viſible a preference to embroidery, finery, and foppiſh manners, above a plain coat, a cultivated underſtanding, and a manly deportment. It will be always ſo, till they acquire a taſte for plainneſs, ſobriety, and wiſdom, in what relates to themſelves. But that muſt begin by reſtraining, in every poſſible way, the fooliſh and pernicious paſſion I am ſpeaking of; for a fooliſh and pernicious paſſion I ſcruple not to pronounce it,

Is there any probability, that thoſe who are entirely under its power will take de-

light in domeſtic, intellectual, or ſpiritual improvements? Is not a conſtant purſuit of trivial ornament an indubitable proof of a trivial mind? Will ſhe that is always looking into her glaſs, be much diſpoſed to look into her character? Is the ſpending of whole hours every morning at the toilet, a likely method of marking the reſt of the day down for wiſdom? Is vanity favourable to devotion, or ſelf-conceit the parent of ſelf-correction? Will that young woman who hopes to captivate by dreſs, or by appearance alone, be very anxious about any better recommendation? If to ſparkle here for a few years be the ſupreme ambition, Hereafter will be hardly thought of. The flattery of every fool will be preferred to the approbation of angels; and a connexion with ſome wretched creature (wretched indeed muſt he be who is caught by mere ſhow!) will be ardently ſought, while the friendſhip of God is neglected. What ſhall I ſay more? For a mortal and im-

mortal being, who has many an error to correct, many a paſſion to mortify, many a virtue to practiſe, and who, if ſhe live, may probably have important ſervice to render ſociety—for ſuch a being to laviſh the principal portion of her time and ſtudy on the decoration of a body that will ſoon, that may ſuddenly, become the prey of creeping things—Gracious God, what folly, what madneſs!

Are there no allowances then to be made? Allowances for what? For the vanity of a young mind. Moſt certainly, if by this plea you mean to extenuate the guilt of ſuch a conduct. But would you offer to excuſe it? Would you pretend to juſtify a reaſonable creature in acting, habitually and wilfully, a moſt unreaſonable part; in ſacrificing her improvement, her ſalvation, her proſpects of uſefulneſs and dignity in life, the beſt intereſts of this world, as well as the everlaſting concernments of the

next, to the idol Dreſs? For ſo I ſtate it. I ſuppoſe, and would to God it were not too common a caſe! that this miſerable idol is ſuffered to ſwallow up the conſideration of all that is ſolid, rational, and praiſe-worthy; to conſume thoſe precious hours that were allotted for the moſt valuable purpoſes; and, in place of ſecuring the great ends of exiſtence both preſent and future, to pervert the capacities of nature, the acquirements of education, and the bounties of providence—to pervert them to the low deſign of being admired for embelliſhments that imply no merit in the wearer, and can confer no honour in the eye of any but the worthleſs and the vain. Can ſuch a conduct, I ſay, be thought innocent, or in any reſpect conſiſtent with the rules of chriſtianity, or of conſcience?

That the idol I ſpeak of renders its votaries unhappy even in this world, is a fact daily experienced. But who can de-

ſcribe the profuſion of expence, with the painful and pitiful ſhifts that are often neceſſary to ſupport it; the encroachments on health, the hurry of ſpirits, the travail of fancy; the degradation of being frequently, for whole hours, under the confident hands of the meaneſt of mankind; together with all the anxieties of heart, the agonies of rivalſhip, the deep-felt diſgrace on being diſappointed of conqueſt, or of fame; the diſtraction and deſpair on being outſhone by—a Finer Gown; in a word, all the ridiculous and all the deſerved diſtreſs, to which they are perpetually expoſed?

I have juſt mentioned encroachments on health. Theſe indeed, as well as the reſt, are little conſidered by a young lady, keen in the purſuit of ſhow and admiration. But if ſhe be not apprehenſive of their conſequences, in relation to life, and comfort, and eaſe, I wonder ſhe is not immediately alarmed at their effects,

with regard to that very appearance which is her favourite object. I wonder ſhe does not perceive at once, how much her bloom and ſprightlineſs, the luſtre of her eyes, and the freſhneſs of her form, are impaired by ſuch endleſs, ſuch enormous fatigue, agitation, and irregularity. I am aſtoniſhed ſhe does not reflect, that ſhe is taking the moſt effectual methods to ſhorten that period of youth, on which her triumphs depend. Miſtaken creature! thou art cruelly haſtening on the time, when thou ſhalt be frightened to look at thyſelf; when not only thy mind, but thy face, ſhall be "ſicklied o'er with the "pale caſt of thought;" when languor, diſeaſe, and depreſſion, ſhall undermine and deſtroy every remaining allurement, and leave thee to lament too late the jading courſe thou haſt run. You forget alſo that dreſſing up beauty continually, wears it out; that, like ſtrength, or ſtudy, or buſineſs, it requires the frequent intermiſſion of its toils; but that, more than

any of them, it is enfeebled by conſtant exertion; and that the arts commonly made uſe of to heighten and repair it, only accelerate and increaſe its decay, while the complexion, the ſkin, and the hair, are all unnaturally diſguiſed and tortured.

Did not this ſhameful paſſion deſtroy, or deaden in a great meaſure, the worthier ſenſibilities of good nature, I ſhould alſo mention here the more ſerious and important diſtreſſes, in which they involve others.—But the ſtretches of credit to parents, the inconveniencies to many families, the ruin to not a few, the loſſes to tradeſmen, who are often not paid, the hardſhips to a vaſt variety of people, whoſe ſufferings are little thought of amidſt the glare of oſtentation and the triumph of fancy, it were impoſſible fully to paint. Who does not know, that the parade of one gaudy evening ſhall ſometimes ſubject a ſcore of honeſt citizens to

difficulties for a whole month? Is this chriſtian? Is this humane? But where the Fury of dreſs tyrannizes, how can the gentle pleadings of Charity hope to be heard? And as to Charity's eldeſt daughter Beneficence, what chance has ſhe, in general, to contend with that mighty ſorcereſs, the Mode? Thoſe ſtreams which heaven has committed to the direction of the former, for the refreſhment of induſtry, and the comfort of affliction; how often are they diverted with ſacrilegious violence to the feeding of pride!

But the preſent age, it will be ſaid, is diſtinguiſhed by the moſt diffuſive, the moſt illuſtrious works of humanity, both private and public. We own it, and rejoice in the effect. Far from denying the people of this country any of their juſt honours, we are almoſt tempted to ſpeak of them with exultation. But—I wiſh the works in queſtion may not be

frequently performed by way of atonement for certain faſhionable vices, which it is too eaſy to reconcile with them.—"Charity hopeth all things."—I know it, and do verily believe that even now, addicted as the world is to oſtentation, there are many, very many characters, who nobly deny themſelves for the ſake of others; or rather, who find the higheſt indulgence in conſecrating to objects of benevolence and piety a large ſhare of their fortunes, without ſeeking by ſuch means to purchaſe a diſpenſation for criminal purſuits. But forgive me, if I ſay, with regard to numbers, that the flagrant affectation of ſhining in public, and the dreadful paſſions thence ariſing in private life, are not eaſily reconciled with real principles of religious munificence. Theſe, I know, are unpopular ideas. I am ſorry for it: but their being ſo, is no reaſon why we ſhould ſuppreſs them; it is the very reverſe.

To the arguments already urged ſeveral may be added. It may deſerve your conſideration,

In the firſt place, that to cultivate cleanlineſs and finery at the ſame time, is rather perhaps a difficult attainment. Your ſex is much belied, if it be a very common one. This, I think, is certain, that to attend with exactneſs to one object at once, is ordinarily ſufficient employment for the mind. But can any degree of finery compenſate the want of cleanlineſs? A dirty woman—I turn from the ſhocking idea, to mention,

In the next place, that engaging thing hinted at before, Simplicity of Dreſs. In all the ſciences, in every valuable profeſſion, in the common intercourſes of life, and let me add, even in the ſublimeſt ſubjects, Simplicity is that which above every thing elſe touches and delights. Without it, indeed, all elſe is feeble and unaffecting.

Where ſimplicity is wanting, men may be dazzled for a moment. Mere ſplendor will ſtrike them at firſt; but on reflexion they will ſoon diſcover, that ſplendor of itſelf, like every other idol, is nothing. On the other hand, where Simplicity, the ſiſter of Truth, appears, the attraction is eternal. Hence the never-failing entertainment and inſtruction derived from the works of antiquity in all the fine arts; of which, I ſuppoſe for that reaſon chiefly, they remain to this day, and will ever remain, the ſovereign ſtandards. Thoſe amongſt the moderns, who have in this reſpect copied them moſt happily, have been always moſt admired. To inſtance in the art of painting, with a more immediate reference to our ſubject; what honour has been acquired by ſuch of its profeſſors as have approached neareſt to the noble ſimplicity of ancient workmanſhip! Its buſineſs, we know, is moſt particularly with Beauty, in all her fineſt forms. That, I preſume, was never ſtudied more

ſucceſsfully by any, than by the great Raphael. But who, that has an eye for ſuch objects, can avoid being ſtruck with the chaſte, ſober, and unaffected graces of his females? And as to his manner of clothing them, what remarkable plainneſs, what delightful modeſty, even where the colours and ſtuffs are intended to be richeſt! How different from thoſe painters of the Gothic ſtyle, who, not underſtanding the diſtinction between ornament, and finery, which is it exceſs; between beauty, and ſhow, which is the affectation of it; load their women with jewels, trappings, and other embelliſhments, magnificent indeed, but tawdry!

Nor is the grand principle of Simplicity confined to the imitative arts; it runs through all. Hence, in a great meaſure, the peculiar ſatisfaction derived from the company of a man well-bred and worthy at the ſame time. He looks, he ſpeaks, he moves, with a modeſt eaſe; there is no-

thing artificial or ſtudied in his converſation and deportment. Hence too the ſuperior pleaſure from the proſpect of a garden laid out with taſte, in which the views are natural, ample, and unforced, above that of ſeeing one cut into a thouſand little parterres, and encumbered with a crowd of laboured conceits. Let me ſubjoin, hence the inexpreſſible power and majeſty of Holy Writ itſelf, even abſtracted from its divine original. And, to come to the caſe directly before us, hence the reſiſtleſs charm which attends a Virtuous Woman attired with plainneſs and judgment; two things, which, making allowance for the mutability and caprice of faſhion in circumſtances of leſs moment, will always give the moſt genuine and laſting content.

The neat appearance of many females belonging to a ſect well known, has been frequently remarked, and greatly admired. It would be much more agreeable, could

it be disjoined from the ſtiffneſs that accompanies it; a defect utterly inconſiſtent with the rules of taſte. But thoſe people are taught to deſpiſe every thing of this kind, and to underſtand literally ſuch paſſages of ſcripture as ſeem to prohibit ſumptuous apparel. In ſhort, they plead religious principle for the form of their attire. We ſhould believe them, but for the richneſs of the materials, and the fineneſs of the texture. Many of that ſect are very intelligent: can they perſuade themſelves, that through all their affectation of plainneſs the world does not perceive the utmoſt pride of expence?

On this article your judgment will be ſeen in joining frugality and ſimplicity together; in being never fond of finery; in carefully diſtinguiſhing between what is glaring, and what is genteel; in preſerving elegance with the plaineſt habit; in wearing coſtly array but ſeldom, and always with eaſe; a point, that may be

attained by her who has learnt not to think more highly of herſelf for the richeſt raiment ſhe can put on.

Were a ſyſtem of this kind to prevail, I cannot help thinking, that the effects would be beneficial and happy. What ſums would be ſaved, where they ought to be ſaved, for more valuable ends! What ſums would be kept at home, that now go abroad to enrich our moſt dangerous rivals! French gewgaws would give place to Britiſh manufactures. The ladies of this iſland, inferior to none in beauty, would be the apes of none in dreſs. They would practiſe that ſpecies of patriotiſm, which is the moſt proper for their ſex; they would ſerve their country in their own way. How many evils to the community, to private families, and to individuals, would be prevented! If in ſome of the moſt expenſive parts of female decoration fewer hands were employed, a much greater number on the other ſide would

find exerciſe in cultivating an elegant propriety, and a beautiful diverſity, through all the reſt. The public taſte would be improved in a thouſand articles. And is there not reaſon to hope, that the appearance, the manners, and the minds of the Fair, would gain by the change?

They would be leſs ſhowy indeed; but they would be more engaging. Our gay aſſemblies, for gay aſſemblies there will always be, would glitter leſs in the gaze of fooliſh wonder; but they would ſhine more in the eye of juſt diſcernment. And what honour would it reflect on your underſtandings, when in company, to ſee you ſuperior to your dreſs, entirely forgetting that, and every other advantage you may poſſeſs, in an obliging attention to all preſent, and lending luſtre to each ornament, inſtead of borrowing it merely from thence! Or will any of you ſay, that a woman on the contrary is likely to be more eſteemed, for appearing attentive to

herſelf alone, or trying to catch by ſo poor a bait, as a little gay clothing? She who does either, piques our pride, and offends our judgment, at the ſame inſtant. We are hurt by her bad breeding, in the one caſe; and in the other, we are provoked to think ſhe ſhould pay us ſuch a ſorry compliment, as to fancy we can be entangled in a cobweb.

When ſhall women, in general, underſtand thoroughly the effect of a comely habit, that, independant of pomp and deſpiſing extravagance, is worn as the ſober, yet tranſparent veil of a more comely mind? Be aſſured, my young friends, it is thus that you will captivate moſt, and pleaſe longeſt. By purſuing this plan, you will preſerve an equality in that great indiſpenſible article of neatneſs. You will be clean, and you will be eaſy; nor will you be in danger of appearing butterflies one day, and flatterns the next. You will be always ready to receive your friends,

without ſeeming to be caught, or being at all diſconcerted on account of your dreſs. How ſeldom is that the caſe amongſt the flutterers of the age! I wiſh we could ſay, amongſt them only. For young ladies of more ſobriety to be found ſo often ſlovenly, I might have ſaid downright ſqualid and naſty, when no viſitors are expected, is moſt peculiarly ſhameful. I cannot expreſs the contempt and the diſguſt I feel, when I think of it. I will not think of it.

I proceed to obſerve, that what you take from tinſel trappings you will gain in time, in ſaving, and in real lovelineſs. The leſs vanity you betray, the more merit we ſhall be always diſpoſed to allow you. We ſhall be doubly charmed, firſt with finding young women that are not ſlaves to ſhow, and next with your putting ſo much reſpect on our heads and hearts, as to ſuppoſe we are only to be gained by better qualities.

Add to this, that men of ordinary fortunes, and proper ſentiments, will not be afraid of connecting themſelves with perſons too prudent to be profuſe, and too wiſe, as well as too worthy, when married, to court the admiration of all—but their Huſbands.

The unbounded and undiſtinguiſhing love of admiration, has been thought the moſt common, the rankeſt, and the moſt noxious weed, that grows in the heart of a female. It is nouriſhed by nothing more than by the love of finery. In effect, they depend on each other. But if you will begin by cruſhing the latter; the former, I am perſuaded, will quickly decay, and at laſt fall to the ground. The love of finery naturally prompts the paſſion to be ſeen, that is, to be admired; for between theſe a conceited young creature makes no diſtinction. Alas! what woman is there at any age, who, if devoted to dreſs, burns not with impatience to diſplay in public

a new faſhion, or a new any thing, which ſhe has been told by thoſe about her, or by her own imagination, looks exceeding fine? And of this impatience what is the ſource, but that very paſſion which I juſt now called The unbounded and undiſtinguiſhing love of admiration? The miſchiefs flowing from thence have been touched upon in part. They will be farther traced hereafter. At preſent I ſhall only add, what ought to alarm women of decency, that an immoderate fondneſs for external embelliſhment is a ſtrong temptation to a light and laſcivious mind.

From the paſſage of Iſaiah before quoted, compared with the verſe immediately preceding, it appears that, in the caſe there pointed to, an indecent deportment was cloſely connected with an exceſſive vanity in apparel. And from the whole of that diſcourſe it is manifeſt, the behaviour of the daughters of Zion at that time

was highly displeasing to the Almighty; which could only proceed from the influence their behaviour had upon their dispositions, or reciprocally from the latter as giving birth to the former. How applicable the observation to the case of many females at this day!

But has it not been too much the manner amongst preachers of every age, to decry that in which they lived, as having remarkably degenerated from those that went before, and to denounce peculiar judgments accordingly? It often has, no doubt. And so far certainly they have forgotten the caution of Solomon; "Say "not thou, What is the cause that the "former days were better than these? "For thou dost not enquire wisely con-"cerning this." A mistake we would willingly avoid. Such complaints, when indulged indiscriminately, are either the dictates of a gloomy and querulous tem-

per, or the trite and unmeaning declamation of mere popular preaching. I truſt, we ſhall be charged with neither in ſaying, that to this nation there can accrue no good from the ſpirit of luxury, of levity, and of vice, ſo prevalent, and ſo ſpreading, in a ſex that leads the world.

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SERMON III.

ON

FEMALE RESERVE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON III.

On Female Reſerve.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themſelves with Shamefacedneſs.

MANY of you, my honoured hearers, have been addreſſed in the ſtyle of love and admiration. I have taken the liberty to addreſs you in that of zeal and friendſhip; a ſtyle not the leſs ſincere, or the leſs worthy of your attention, for being ſober and impartial. Will you permit me to proceed in the ſame manner? Suppoſe me ſpeaking to you as a brother. It will be more than a ſuppoſition. Have we not all one father by creation, even the great God? and by religion, is not the New Jeruſalem the

mother of us all? With a brother's affection then I will go on to lay before you ſome better ornaments than wealth can purchaſe, in which I wiſh my beloved ſiſters to ſhine, that they may appear as becomes their high birth, and the noble expectations they are encouraged to entertain.

After modeſt apparel our apoſtle mentions Shamefacedneſs. "I will—that women adorn themſelves in modeſt apparel, with Shamefacedneſs." This lovely quality, in its largeſt extent, and in its moſt pleaſing effects on female manners, ſhall be the ſubject of our preſent meditation. It is an ornament equally neceſſary and wiſe.

I. It is a Neceſſary ornament, conſidered, I mean, in a moral and religious light. I would only premiſe, that the amiable reſerve, termed by St. Paul Shamefacedneſs, is ſomething widely di-

ſtant from thoſe airs of diſdain, thoſe pretences of averſion to men, which we now and then meet with in your ſex. I ſaid Pretences: For no degree of candour can perſuade us to believe that ſuch women, generally ſpeaking, do not play a part, and under the maſk of this ſeeming ſeverity, this violent affectation of virtue, harbour paſſions of a very different kind. Who does not know, that the greateſt prudes have often dropt their diſguiſe at laſt; and betrayed ſuch diſpoſitions as many a young woman of good nature, and courteous behaviour, is incapable of indulging? Every thing overdone is liable to ſuſpicion. Innocence in women wants not the aid of oſtentation: like integrity in men, it reſts in its own conſciouſneſs. Not ſo, however, as to neglect the rules of prudence and circumſpection. To ſay the truth, prudery is not the prevailing evil of the times. Female modeſty, even where it is moſt real, is in little danger, as the world goes, of

being carried to an extreme. In the gayer part of the world, how ſeldom, alas! does it riſe to the Shamefacedneſs enjoined in our text, and which on the very firſt hearing ſuggeſts the idea of a virtuous baſhfulneſs. This beautiful grace,

" Clear Chaſtity
" With bluſhes redd'ning as ſhe moves along,
" Diſorder'd at the deep regard ſhe draws;"

whither is ſhe retired? Where is the charming original, from which the poet drew ſo ſweet a picture?—Has Virtue then forſaken the ſex? God forbid. But I am bold to ſay, her favourite walks are not in thoſe places of public entertainment, now ſo fondly frequented by ſo many women. She loves the ſhade. There ſhe finds herſelf moſt ſecure from the blights of calumny, and the heats of temptation. Ah! ye mothers of this land, how can you expoſe ſo raſhly thoſe tender bloſſoms committed to your care? Have

ye forgotten that every unkindly breath is ready to blaſt them? Are ye ignorant, how ſoon the whiteſt innocence may be ſullied; that it is poſſible even for the ſtricteſt principles to be corrupted? Is there nothing in your own minds that whiſpers the frailty of your ſex?

But you plead the neceſſity of allowing to youth a little amuſement, of ſhowing your daughters a little of the world, of preventing, or rubbing off the aukwardneſs, that is apt to adhere to young perſons who are confined at home. You urge the propriety of convincing them by compariſon, how much the calm and rational pleaſures of that home are preferable to the noiſy and giddy diverſions uſually found abroad; that in the latter there is nothing ſo wonderfully fine, ſo irreſiſtibly alluring, as their youthful fancies, or the information of others, might lead them to ſuppoſe.

We admit your arguments, ſo far as they go. Keep within theſe bounds, and be blameleſs. But do the parents of the preſent generation commonly keep within them? Are not many of thoſe parents as fond of gaiety and ſhow, as the mereſt girl can poſſibly be? Is it ſurpriſing to ſee the daughters of ſuch become very early the votaries of Folly, when every other day or night they are conducted in triumph to her temples, without any precaution, any previous pains taken to inſtruct them in the emptineſs and worthleſsneſs of the object worſhipped there; worſhipped with every circumſtance that can ſerve to propagate the idolatry, while the poor innocents are inflamed by the concurrence of company, dreſs, flattery, example; the example of thoſe whom, by nature and education, they are diſpoſed to reſpect moſt highly, and to imitate moſt implicitly? It were ſtrange indeed, if in this ſituation their too ſuſceptible hearts ſhould eſcape the faſhionable con-

tagion. But what can be ſaid for thoſe who thus directly, and with their eyes open, lead their children into a ſnare? —Ceaſe, thou reſtleſs and raging ſpirit of hell, who art "going about ſeeking "whom thou mayeſt devour," ceaſe thy cruel toil. The parents of Britain render it needleſs. The mothers of the church haſten to bring thee their little lambs, as if impatient for the pleaſure of preſenting them.——Excuſe, ye better characters, this tranſport of indignation, kindled by an impiety which you are not capable of committing. I think with honour of all who truly merit the parental name. May the Father of the world increaſe their number, and multiply their joys! But for thoſe wicked——I turn from them to you, ye pretty helpleſs creatures, who have loſt—it may be, happily—merciful heaven! muſt I ſay, Happily loſt your parents? or whoſe parents yet alive, but loſt to themſelves and to their offſpring, have in the blindneſs of indul-

gence, or the barbarity of neglect, abandoned you to your own untutored conduct. Let me warn you of your danger. If there be no other friend to ſhow a ſolicitude for your welfare, allow me at leaſt to have that ſatisfaction.

Reflect, my ſiſters, on all I have ſaid concerning your importance in life; and look beyond life's narrow boundary. Conſider everlaſting conſequences. Contemplate approaching judgment. You have received from the Almighty your bodies, and your ſouls, unſtained by diſhonour. You will be ſoon required to reſtore them immaculate. You belong to a ſociety, for which your Saviour "gave himſelf, that he might ſanctify and "cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by "the word, that he might preſent it to "himſelf a glorious church, not having "ſpot, or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing." Think of this. "Watch and pray, that "ye enter not into temptation."

The love of promiſcuous amuſement, how innocent ſoever it may often ſeem, and ſometimes be, enſnares multitudes of your ſex. Their earlieſt days are marked by a mixture of ſprightlineſs and ſimplicity. They run, they laugh, they prattle; and then they often bluſh, for fear of having offended. As they grow up, their ſenſibilities become more enlightened, and more awake. They bluſh oftener. It is the precious colouring of virtue, as one has happily phraſed it. They contract a quicker perception of what is decent, and of what is wiſe. A ſweet timidity was given them to guard their innocence, by inclining them to ſhrink from whatever might threaten to injure it. Their paſſions, as they riſe, are reſtrained from exorbitance, by a ſecret ſentiment of ſhame and honour. In this ſtate of mind, they come to hear much concerning public diverſions. The deſcription is frequently repeated, and always exaggerated. Their curioſity takes fire; they

are eager to participate. They are indulged once, a ſecond, a third time, often, without controul. By little and little their natural fearfulneſs begins to abate. For a while they are ſhocked at ſigns of rudeneſs. Their ears are wounded by the language of vice: Oaths, imprecations, double meanings, every thing obſcene fills them with diſguſt and horror. But cuſtom ſoon begets familiarity; and familiarity produces indifference. The emotions of delicacy are leſs frequent, leſs ſtrong. And now they ſeldom bluſh, although perhaps they often affect it. At the image of ſin they tremble no longer: their minds are already debauched. All the internal fences of modeſty are broken down. Can you wonder, if it be then eaſily aſſailed from without? But what if it be not? What if appearances be ſtill preſerved, if open ſcandal be not incurred, or if ſecret enormity ſhould be always avoided? Is it enough for a young woman to be free

from infamy, from crimes? Between the ſtate of virgin purity and actual proſtitution are there no intermediate degrees? Is it nothing to have the ſoul deflowered, the fancy polluted, the paſſions flung into a ferment? Say, is it nothing to forfeit inward freedom and ſelf-poſſeſſion? The beauty, the dignity, the tranquillity of conſcious virtue—are all theſe of no account? Such indeed one would think were the opinion of thoſe, who imagine there can be no harm in a paſſion for places of entertainment; Becauſe, ſay they, all attacks on the honour of perſons who reſort thither are precluded. Be that as it may, I muſt ever maintain, that young women of principle will be cautious of frequenting ſcenes where Shamefacedneſs, at once the companion and the guardian of female innocence, is in danger of being loſt. But I add, that every prudent young woman alſo will be extremely wary in this particular; becauſe,

II. The ornament we now recommend is as Wiſe, as it is Neceſſary. There is nothing ſo engaging as baſhful beauty. The beauty that obtrudes itſelf, how conſiderable ſoever, will either diſguſt, or at moſt excite but inferior deſires. Men are ſo made. They refuſe their admiration, where it is courted: where it ſeems rather ſhunned, they love to beſtow it. The retiring graces have been always the moſt attractive.

You remember the repreſentation which Milton puts into Adam's mouth of his firſt meeting with our general mother. How beautiful, and how delicate!

" She heard me thus, and though divinely
" brought,
" Yet innocence and virgin modeſty,
" Her virtue and the conſcience of her worth,
" That would be woo'd, and not unſought
" be won,
" Not obvious, not obtruſive, but retir'd,
" The more deſirable; or, to ſay all,

" Nature herſelf, tho' pure of ſinful thought,
" Wrought in her ſo, that ſeeing me ſhe turn'd.
" I follow'd her. She what was honour knew,
" And with obſequious majeſty approv'd
" My pleaded reaſon. To the nuptial bower
" I led her bluſhing like the morn."

But this was only the poet's fancy. True. Yet the poet knew the ſexes well, and ſeems to have ſtudied yours particularly. He painted from the completeſt ſtandards he could find. His picture of Eve, in her ſtate of innocence, may be conſidered as the model of a woman moſt amiably feminine; in whom his imagination, alike exalted and correct, could figure nothing ſo alluring,

" As thoſe graceful acts,
" Thoſe thouſand decencies that daily flow
" From all her words and actions."

What mind of any worth can forbear to be charmed with the deſcription you have juſt heard?

To ſay the truth, there is not, I verily believe, a man living, who in his ſober ſenſes would not prefer a modeſt to an impudent woman. An impudent woman—Who can tell which is greater, the diſgrace thrown upon humanity by ſuch a character, or the honour reflected on our natures by that abhorrence, which is raiſed by the bare idea in every breaſt not totally degenerate?

Surely it deſerves your notice, what pains the all-preſiding power has graciouſly taken to ſhow his care of female virtue, not only by impreſſing the minds of your ſex with that deep and lively ſenſe of reputation, which is one of its moſt powerful preſervatives, but alſo by forming the minds of ours with ſo high an eſteem for every indication of chaſtity in women, and with ſo ſtrong a diſapprobation of the contrary. That eſteem, and this diſapprobation, it is certain, are felt by the men, whenſoever reaſon is per-

mitted to take place of appetite; and these indications are perfectly and universally intelligible. I say not, that those of the last kind are always apparent, where women have given themselves up to vice; but, I apprehend, they are so for the greater part. This breach of her most sacred law, the justice of Nature has generally branded with a look and manner peculiarly characteristic and significant; as, on the other side, she has always (I think, always) marked the genuine feelings of modesty with a look and manner no less correspondent and expressive.

In the latter case, she seems to say to us men, pointing to her yet uncorrupted daughters, 'Behold these smiling inno-'cents, whom I have graced with my 'fairest gifts, and committed to your 'protection; behold them with love and 'respect; treat them with tenderness 'and honour. They are timid, and want 'to be defended. They are frail; O do

'not take advantage of their weakneſs. 'Let their fears and bluſhes endear them. 'Let their confidence in you never be 'abuſed——But is it poſſible, that any 'of you can be ſuch barbarians, ſo ſu- 'premely wicked, as to abuſe it? Can 'ye find in your hearts to deſpoil the 'gentle truſting creatures of their trea- 'ſure, or do any thing to ſtrip them of 'their native robe of virtue? Curſt be 'the impious hand that would dare to 'violate the unblemiſhed form of Chaſti- 'ty! Thou wretch! thou ruffian! for- 'bear; nor venture to provoke heaven's 'fierceſt vengeance.'

In the other caſe, the ſame parental power, equally watchful for all her children, ſeems to caſt an eye of awful reproach on ſuch of her daughters as are unhappily abandoned, and, raiſing her voice, to addreſs our ſex to this purpoſe: 'Flee, my ſons, flee theſe deſtructive Sy- 'rens. They ſmile, only to tempt; and

'they tempt, in order to devour. Once 'indeed they ſhone in many of my 'ſweeteſt charms. Theſe are no more. 'They have forgotten to bluſh; their 'foreheads are hardened into ſhameleſſ-'neſs. Their eyes formerly ſoft, vir-'tuous, and downcaſt; thoſe very eyes 'that effuſed the ſoul of innocence, 'have learnt to ſtare, and roll with un-'bounded wantonneſs; to dart nothing 'but unholy fire. Their hands are the 'hands of Harpies. Their feet go down 'to death, and their ſteps take hold 'on hell.'

This account of thoſe wretched beings will be always true in part. The profligate and the fooliſh, that are taken in their toils, ſhall ſome time or other be ſure to repent it. Nevertheleſs it muſt be owned, there are of them who, with hearts of adamant to the beſt impreſſions, and without any remains of natural modeſty, yet practiſe the art of feigning its decent de-

meanour; one of the ſtrongeſt arguments that can be conceived in its favour!

Yes, thoſe more accompliſhed enſnarers are ſufficiently aware, that there is no allurement equal to that of maiden virtue; and therefore, having loſt the reality, they ſtudy to retain the appearance. In this inſtance, no doubt, as in numberleſs others, the operations of Nature may be counteracted by violence, and her moſt ſpeaking features ſilenced by diſſimulation. But ah, how much more eaſy, pleaſant, noble, and happy, to be virtuous, than only to ſeem ſo! That vicegerent of God within us, Conſcience, will not bear the abuſe calmly. All eſſential tranſgreſſions of order, how ſucceſsful ſoever they may outwardly appear, ſhall certainly be puniſhed by inward diſquietude, and home-felt meanneſs. But the truth is, that the art of diſſembling, in the caſe before us, ſeldom ſucceeds ſo far, as not to be ſeen through on many

occaſions; and when it is, the contempt and averſion produced by it, are only heightened by thoſe attempts to impoſe. Of this be aſſured, that to the ſenſe of decency there is nothing more diſguſting, than the notion of a young woman who cannot be put out of countenance. In our ſex, the character of being loſt to ſhame is ſcandalous; but in yours—who can deſcribe the deteſtation it excites?

Next to this is the diſlike we feel to her who has contracted a certain briſkneſs of air and levity of deportment, which, though by good nature, or the courteſy of cuſtom, diſtinguiſhed from the brazen front and bold attack of the proſtitute, does yet, I cannot help ſaying, approach too near them, and can never, I am ſure, be pleaſing to men of ſentiment. Such an air and deportment, I well know, are by many eſteemed marks of ſpirit. It may be ſo. I am willing at leaſt to believe, that no real harm is

meant by numbers who affect them. But ſurely they are the worſt kind of affectation. I had rather a thouſand times ſee a young lady carry her baſhfulneſs too far, than pique herſelf on the freedom of her manners.

A maſculine woman muſt be naturally an unamiable creature. I confeſs myſelf ſhocked, whenever I ſee the ſexes confounded. An effeminate fellow, that, deſtitute of every manly ſentiment, copies with inverted ambition from your ſex, is an object of contempt and averſion at once. On the other hand, any young woman of better rank, that throws off all the lovely ſoftneſs of her nature, and emulates the daring intrepid temper of a man—how terrible! The transformation on either ſide muſt ever be monſtrous. Is not this ſhadowed out to us in that particular prohibition of the Jewiſh law, which ſays, "The woman ſhall not wear "that which pertaineth unto a man;

"neither ſhall a man put on a woman's "garment. For all that do ſo are abomi- "nation unto the Lord!" Such confuſion of apparel was to be conſidered as renouncing, in effect, the diſtinction of form, which the Almighty had eſtabliſhed in the creation. To this unnatural mode do we not ſometimes obſerve a viſible tendency in our days? But what though the dreſs be kept ever ſo diſtinct, if the behaviour be not; in thoſe points, I mean, where the character peculiar to each ſex ſeems to require a difference? There, a metamorphoſis in either will always offend an eye that is not greatly vitiated. It will do ſo particularly in your ſex. By dint of aſſiduity and flattery, fortune and ſhow, a Female Man ſhall ſometimes ſucceed ſtrangely with the women: but to the men an Amazon never fails to be forbidding. Are none of you, my fair hearers, in danger of roughening into this ungracious figure? How readily it is aſſumed, in thoſe ſcenes where the ignorance

of youth co-operates with the magic of fashion, many of you perhaps will not suspect.

Men, I presume, are in general better judges than women, of the deportment of women. Whatever affects them from your quarter they feel more immediately. You slide insensibly into a certain cast of manners; you perceive not the gradations; you do not see yourselves at a proper distance. If the effect produced be on the whole disagreeable, self-love will not be the first to discover it. Men, it is true, are often dazzled by youth, vivacity, and beauty: but yet at times they will look at you with a cooler eye, and a closer inspection, than you apprehend; at least, when they have opportunities of seeing you in private company.

In splendid crowds all is dissipated, because all is garish. The multiplicity of objects scatters and distracts: nothing is

felt or thought of, in the way of either ſerious reflexion, or ſerious paſſion. How much misjudged is an exceſſive fondneſs for ſuch ſcenes! Believe me, they are not the places, where the heart is moſt apt to be touched.

At any rate, the majeſty of the ſex is ſure to ſuffer by being ſeen too frequently, and too familiarly. Diſcreet reſerve in a woman, like the diſtance kept by royal perſonages, contributes to maintain the proper reverence. Moſt of our pleaſures are prized in proportion to the difficulty with which they are obtained. The ſight of beauty may be juſtly reckoned in that number. Nothing can be more impolitic in young ladies, than to make it cheap. "So long," ſays a lively author, "as they govern themſelves by the exact "rules of prudence and modeſty, their "luſtre is like the meridian ſun in its "clearneſs, which, though leſs approach-"able, is counted more glorious; but

" when they decline from thoſe, they are
" like that ſun in a cloud, which, though
" ſafelier gazed on, is not half ſo bright."

Even the worſt men are ſtruck by the ſovereignty of female worth unambitious of appearing. But if a young perſon (ſuppoſing her diſpoſitions in other reſpects ever ſo good) will be always breaking looſe through each domeſtic incloſure, and ranging at large the wide common of the world, thoſe deſtroyers will ſee her in a very different point of light. They will conſider her as lawful game, to be hunted down without heſitation. And if her virtue, or (which to a woman is in effect nearly the ſame) her reputation, ſhould be loſt, what will it avail the poor wanderer, to plead that ſhe meant only a little harmleſs amuſement, and never thought of ſtraying into the abhorred paths of vice?

With regard to the opinion of the better ſort of men, I will tell you a ſecret,

If in the flutter of too public a life you ſhould at any time ſo far forget yourſelves, as to drop that nice decorum of appearance and manner, which is expected from your ſex, particularly from the younger part of it, they will be tempted to harbour ſuſpicions which I dare not name; that is, many of them will. The reſt, who know you better, or have more charity, will be hurt to think you ſhould expoſe yourſelves to a degree of cenſure, which in reality you do not deſerve. Yet none of them hardly will be kind enough to offer you a friendly hint of what ſo much concerns you; not even where it might be done with the moſt perfect propriety. Their general inclination to good nature, their love of amuſement in their turn, and their finding it moſt readily in the ſociety of your ſex, will diſpoſe them to laugh with you very freely. Intimacy will lead on to a kind of attachment. They will often entertain you with no little gallantry; ſometimes per-

haps at an expence which they can ill afford. In a word, they will be mightily pleaſed with you—as the companions of an hour. Companions for life, if they ever think of ſuch, they will look out for elſewhere. They will then make the neceſſary diſcrimination; I mean, if they be wiſe and honeſt enough to marry from choice. They will then try if they can find women well-bred and ſober-minded at the ſame time, of a chearful temper with ſedate manners; women, of whom they may hope that they will love home, be attached to their huſbands, attentive to their families, reaſonable in their wiſhes, moderate in their expences, and not addicted to eternal ſhow. Having found them, whether with or without fortune (that will never be their prime conſideration) they will endeavour to gain them by another ſort of ſtyle and behaviour, than they uſed towards you. Far other ſentiments, far other emotions, will then poſſeſs them. In ſhort, their hearts will

be then engaged; and if they ſhould be happy enough to obtain the much wiſhed for objects, then, with a joy unfelt before, they will form the tendereſt of all connexions; leaving you where they found you, as widely removed as ever from the trueſt pleaſures, and the faireſt proſpects, that humanity knows; the pleaſures which are enjoyed at home, and the proſpects which include a family.

But many of you, I fear, will ſmile at all this, truſting to the flatterer Beauty, that, whenever you ſhall pleaſe, you cannot fail to fix your men; and ſo, in the gaiety of your ſpirits, you continue to exhibit that beauty as uſual, and to dance along through the giddy maze. Not to inſiſt, at preſent, how precarious and tranſient an attendant this arch-flatterer has always proved; I muſt remind you, that a face hackneyed in the public eye, how ſtriking ſoever when firſt ſeen, or how handſome ſoever it may yet re-

main, loſes much of its power to pleaſe. Every new appearance takes ſomething from its charms; and for one inſtance wherein this kind of exhibition ſucceeds, how many might be named in which young women once extolled, and run after every where, have lived to tread the beaten round, unpraiſed, neglected, forlorn!

No, thoſe large promiſcuous circles are not the ſcenes where the heart is commonly intereſted. Virtuous love, like true devotion, flies from noiſe, ſeeks retreat, and delights to indulge itſelf, unobſerved by all but the object of its veneration. That reſpectful modeſty, which attends it on the part of the man, is maintained and exalted by nothing ſo much as an unaffected baſhfulneſs on the woman's ſide. But this laſt, which properly ſpeaking is the flower of female chaſtity, is of a nature ſo delicate and tender, as always to thrive beſt in places

the leaſt frequented. What pity, when, inſtead of being ſheltered and cheriſhed with care, it is heedleſsly expoſed to the wanton gaze of every wandering eye, to the cruel hand of every rude, or of every ſly invader! Can any entertainment, or any admiration, the public has power to offer, compenſate the loſs of this enchanting quality?

Say not that it is incompatible with politeneſs, or with affability. We have ſeen it accompanied with the ſweeteſt affability, and with the moſt perfect politeneſs. Depend upon it, that the beſt breeding is not learnt by rambling from one aſſembly, and one diverſion, to another; but by living among the beſt bred people, by cultivating a fund of goodneſs in the heart, and poſſeſſing the advantage of a well educated mind.

After what you have heard, I hope you will not imagine, that the Baſhfulneſs I

plead for tends to obſtruct any one view, which it becomes a wiſe and worthy woman to entertain. Some men, I confeſs, may be flattered by forward advances from thoſe of your ſex, whom the ingenious Mr. Richardſon uſed to term Seekers. But is there not reaſon to apprehend, that when they come to reflect coolly, their eſteem will not be laſting, where the foundation of it is not natural? There are other men, it is but fair to tell you, who will appear delighted with this kind of courtſhip, pretend the higheſt regard pay you a world of compliments by which they mean nothing, and ſwear to the firſt worthleſs companion they meet, that you have a deſign upon them. Can you bear the thought of expoſing yourſelves to ſuch an imputation? How mortifying, on thoſe occaſions, to hear a girl ſeriouſly boaſt of her imaginary conqueſts! How weak in her, to fancy that every man who flatters her, not to ſay every man who treats her with the attention to which your ſex are entitled, is a lover!

I ſpeak not of thoſe more deſerving females, whoſe peace of mind has been cruelly ſported with by a ſpecies of poltrons, the diſgrace of their ſex, the reverſe of all that is brave or humane; whoſe buſineſs and boaſt it is, to inveigle the affections of virtuous women by endleſs obſequiouſneſs, and ſolemn profeſſions, that ſeem to imply every thing juſt and kind, till they have undone the credulous fair ones, whom they then barbarouſly conſign to infamy and wo: or elſe, finding that they have gone too far in the purſuit of thoſe who will not yield but on honourable terms, to which they have not the ſpirit or probity to agree, they poorly and baſely relinquiſh them, after having ſtolen their hearts. Happy creatures, to be ſo relinquiſhed, though not happy to be ſo inveigled! What an eſcape have ye made from wretches that never deſerved you! If your honeſt pride be hurt at firſt, as it cannot fail of being, that very pride will ſoon

inſpire you with a generous contempt; the only ſenſation fit to be retained on ſuch a ſubject.

To return to thoſe of your ſex, whom a rage for amuſement and admiration has robbed of one of the fineſt ornaments that can adorn them, the Shamefacedneſs I have been endeavouring to inculcate. After having ſaid ſo much to ſhow how highly they are to blame; what ſhall I ſay to thoſe, whoſe duty it is to adviſe them better, but who have always neglected it? Surely it might be thought, that ſuch of their female acquaintance, and ſuch eſpecially of their female relations as are advanced in life, would, from their ſuperior ſtore of judgment and obſervation, be friendly enough to communicate to thoſe ignorant or unexperienced young creatures, ſome ſalutary counſel on this and other important articles. I know they will excuſe themſelves, by pleading the difficulty of the taſk. I own it diffi-

cult. To adviſe well was always ſo; and who can be ſure of adviſing ſucceſsfully? Is it therefore never to be attempted? In the preſent caſe, I cannot doubt but good counſel, offered with prudence and affection, would often ſucceed.

St. Paul, who held it not unworthy of an Apoſtle to enter with the greateſt particularity into the concerns of common life, directs Titus to remind the aged women of their duty on this very head. His words are remarkable: "Speak thou the things "that become ſound doctrine;"—among the reſt—"that the aged women may "teach the young women to be ſober, to "love their huſbands, to love their chil-"dren"—What follows?—"to be diſ-"creet, chaſte, keepers at home." The precept indeed points to young women in the ſtate of wedlock. But will any ſuppoſe the apoſtle meant to exclude women yet unmarried from that part of it, which, on his principles, muſt neceſſarily be ap-

plicable to them? That women who, having families of their own, go much abroad, and affect to ſhine any where but in their proper ſphere, are peculiarly to blame, muſt, I think, be acknowledged. But will you thence infer, that they who have none are at liberty to ſtroll about perpetually, to prefer every place to home, and neglect the moſt reſpectable virtues, the moſt valuable accompliſhments, for the parade of dreſs, the diſplay of beauty, and the tricks of affectation?

It is truly ſad to ſee ſo many young ladies, ſhowing themſelves every day in the markets of Vanity, who by a proper deportment elſewhere might render themſelves agreeable and happy; to ſee them trifling away the opportunities of doing both, and ſacrificing to a falſe ambition the real importance of their ſex. But it is no leſs ſurpriſing than ſad, to find amongſt women of age and experience ſo few, comparatively ſpeaking, who have

the conſcience or the humanity to contribute to their reformation and welfare.

Imagine a ſet of chaſte matrons, anciently mothers in this metropolis, who lived and died in ſacred obſcurity, were ſeldom found from their own houſes, but placed their humble glory in ſhining there, particularly in breeding their children to every thing prudent and praiſeworthy; imagine them for a little to return to life, and to obſerve unknown the manners of the preſent age. When, amongſt other things, they ſaw the daughters of many a citizen, glittering in gorgeous apparel not paid for, rolling their eyes on every ſide through a large aſſembly, ſtudying by every childiſh art to draw the notice of the men, contending with one another who ſhould be moſt the objects of attention, catching with a kind of triumph each tranſient glance, nor ſhowing the ſmalleſt uneaſineſs even to be ſtared at by the moſt licentious eye, or to

be blown upon by the moſt corrupted breath of every vile betrayer—I purſue the deſcription no farther—what would our venerable ſpectators think of their poſterity! What grief would fill their hearts on the occaſion! But how great would be their aſtoniſhment and horror, when informed, that numbers of thoſe young perſons, whoſe behaviour was ſo unbecoming, had not been taught by their mothers, their grand-mothers, or any other friend in the world, one ſolid leſſon of wiſdom or frugality, of female decorum or Amiable Reſerve!

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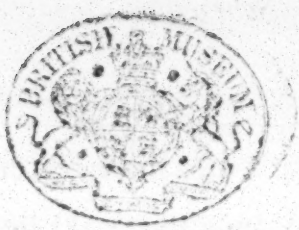
SERMON IV.

ON

FEMALE VIRTUE.


BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON IV.

On Female Virtue.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themſelves with Sobriety.

A Plain dreſs you have often found extremely pleaſing. What ſuch a dreſs is to the perſon; that, and much more, is Sobriety to the mind. Sobriety is a ſort of ſpiritual veſture entirely void of ſhow; ſubſtantial, home-ſpun, and hardy; calculated to defend againſt the injuries of the world, as well as to cover the nakedneſs of the ſoul; proper to be worn every day, and not unfit for any place where a reaſonable being ought to appear; perfectly decent, and to a judicious eye extremely beautiful; in a word,

ſo indiſpenſible and becoming, that ſhe who is without it has been ever deemed, by the virtuous and wiſe, an object of deformity, loathing, and wretchedneſs. Like every thing elſe of greateſt value, its worth is beſt known by its loſs. That this quality, which like your daily clothing anſwers ſo many uſeful and neceſſary ends, ſhould like that too not ſtrike the generality of beholders, reflects in my opinion honour on your ſex. It would be more eſteemed, were it leſs common. And here I muſt complain of thoſe men who will allow little or no merit to a woman for being ſober; when, if ſhe were not, they would condemn her loudly. If the vice be ſcandalous, can the virtue fail of being honourable?

To argue from an inſtance ſomewhat ſimilar. Becauſe diſobedience to parents is unnatural and vile, does it follow that filial piety deſerves little or no praiſe? But the temptations to this

rime are uſually inconſiderable, fre-
uently none at all; whereas to inde-
orum, intemperance, and incontinence,
is certain many women are under ſtrong
mptations: it is alſo certain, that many
ave given way to them; it is probable
here are but few, whoſe virtue in thoſe
rticulars has not been expoſed to very
ngerous ſnares: yet the far greater part
reſerve it entire; and ſhall we deny them
r tribute of approbation? Forbid it
enerosity and Juſtice!

The ſpeaking with contempt of what
commonly called Negative Virtue, is
ten the mere rant of an affected philo-
phy. To make ſome allowance for the
ndition of humanity, were ſurely more
odeſt and candid. Where does he live,
d what is his name, who dares be con-
ent, that in any given circumſtance of
itical trial his own reſolutions would re-
in unſhaken? For vice and immorali-
, though there may be alleviations, there

can be no excuſe. But yet, on the other hand, ſituated as mortals are, a moral or inoffenſive conduct is fairly entitled to commendation from mortals. Your ſituation, my young friends, demands much candour from us, and mighty caution in you.

The ornament of Sobriety, which comes next to be conſidered, is by no means a cheap one. But though it be purchaſed with difficulty, it is loſt with eaſe. To preſerve it, will require the unremitted exerciſe of prudence, vigilance, and ſevere circumſpection: or to ſpeak more properly, theſe are parts of this quality which in effect is of a mixed and comprehenſive nature. To deſcribe it at large is not my deſign. The attempt would lead into a diſcuſſion much too dry and unintereſting. If poſſible, I would engage your attention to truth, and your heart to goodneſs, in a different way; by ſentiment, perſuaſion, and the native influ-

ence of fraternal counſel. Come then, my ſiſters, and hearken to a brother, while he endeavours to ſhow you on one ſide thoſe things which you ought principally to ſhun, in order to the maintaining of your Sobriety; and to point out on the other that poſitive diſcipline, which muſt co-operate for this purpoſe. At preſent we can only undertake the former of theſe points. But before we proceed to that, let me deſire you to take notice with what propriety the apoſtle's ideas ſeem to riſe one above another. He begins with that which is moſt directly obvious, and the very firſt precaution to be obſerved, Modeſty of Apparel. Then he mentions Shamefacedneſs; which, though ſometimes leſs apparent, yet when obſerved cannot fail of recommending itſelf to every eye, and without which decency of garb is mere affectation. Shamefacedneſs, as he has ranked it, appears like a kind of finer covering, the virgin veil of Chaſtity, to be

thrown over all the reſt. But that it may be a veil in the beſt ſenſe, a holy veil and no maſk, he ſubjoins Sobriety as the more inward habit (ſo to ſpeak) which muſt ſupport and give value to the whole; or, to drop the metaphor, as that internal and prevailing character, by which every part of a woman's dreſs and demeanour muſt ever be regulated. Now to cultivate this character, it is of infinite conſequence,

In the firſt place, to avoid Dangerous Connexions. If that be not done, what is there on earth, or in heaven, that can ſave you? Of miraculous interpoſition I think not at preſent. She can have no right to expect it, who throws herſelf into the broad way of temptation. What thoſe dangerous connexions are, it may not be always eaſy to explain, when it becomes a queſtion in real life. Unhappily for young women, it is a queſtion ſometimes of very nice deciſion. Caſes there are, in which nothing can be clearer.

The man that behaves with open rudeneſs, the man that avowedly laughs at virtue, the man that impudently pleads for vice; ſuch a man is to be ſhunned like a rattle-ſnake. In this caſe, "The "woman that deliberates is loſt." What! would you parley with the deſtroyer, when he gives you warning? Then you are not enſnared, you knowingly and wilfully expoſe yourſelves. If you be poiſoned, if you be loſt; your folly is without excuſe, and your deſtruction without alleviation.

But in this manner none will proceed, except wretches alike licentious and imprudent. Of artful men the approaches will be ſilent and ſlow; all will be ſoft inſinuation: or elſe they will put on a blunt face of ſeeming good humour, the appearance of honeſt frankneſs, drawing you to every ſcene of diſſipation with a kind of obliging violence, ſhould violence of any

kind be neceſſary. If they be alſo agreeable in their perſons, or lively in their converſation; above all, if they wear the air of gentlemen, which, unfortunately for your ſex, is too often the caſe; then indeed your danger is extreme. Thus far the trap is concealed. You apprehend nothing; your unſuſpecting hearts begin to ſlide: they are gone before you are aware. The men I am ſpeaking of perceive their advantage the moment it appears. I have ſuppoſed them deſtitute of worth. If they be alſo unchecked by fear, what can preſerve you? A ſenſe of reputation? the dread of ruin? Perhaps they may; but perhaps not. They have often, no doubt, come in to prevent the laſt exceſs. And, but for ſuch reſtraints, what would become of many a woman who is not under that beſt one, religious principle? The experiment, however, you will own is hazardous. Multitudes have truſted to it, and been undone.

But do thoſe, who in the world's ſenſe are not undone, eſcape, think ye, unhurt; unhurt in their health and ſpirits, in their ſerenity and ſelf-enjoyment, in their ſobriety of mind and habits of ſelf-controul? You cannot think it. Very ſeldom at leaſt can you ſuppoſe, that, where there is much ſenſibility of temper, an ill placed paſſion ſhall not leave behind it, in a youthful breaſt, great diſorder and deep diſquietude.

But how, you will aſk, is the ſnare to be eluded, hidden as it frequently is? Not ſo hidden throughout, as to be inviſible, unleſs you will ſhut your eyes. Is it not your buſineſs to enquire into the character of the man that profeſſes an attachment? Or is character nothing? Is there no eſſential difference between a man of decency and honour, or who has all along paſſed for ſuch, and a man who is known to lead an irregular life, or who is ſuſpected however to be the ſmiling foe

of female virtue? May you not learn, if you please, with whom the person in question associates? Or is a man's choice of company nothing? If not resolved to be blind, you may surely discover whether such a person proceeds by little and little to take off the visor, and appear what he is, by loose sentiments, indecent advances, an ambiguous style, an alarming assurance, "foolish talking, and jesting which "is not convenient."—I blush for numbers of your sex, who not only express no displeasure at these things, but by a loud laugh, or childish titter, or foolish simper, or some other indication of a light mind, show real satisfaction, perhaps high complacence.

Another thing, no less abominable, I cannot forbear to mention. How common is it to see young ladies, who pass for women of reputation, admitting into their company in public places, and with visible tokens of civility and pleasure, men,

whom the moment before they ſaw herding with creatures of infamous name! Gracious God, what a defiance to the laws of piety, prudence, character, decorum! What an inſult, in effect, to every man and woman of virtue in the world! What a palpable encouragement to vice and diſhonour! What a deſperate attempt to pull down, in appearance, and with their own hands, the only partition that divides them from the moſt profligate of their ſex! Between the bold and the abandoned woman there may ſtill remain, notwithſtanding ſuch behaviour, a diſtinction in the world's eye; but we ſcruple not to declare, that religion, purity, delicacy, make none.

To return from this digreſſion, if it be one, we will allow it poſſible to put caſes wherein no particular rules of diſcovery, nc determinate modes of judgment, will enable a young woman, by her own unaſſiſted ſkill, to diſcern the dangers that

lie in her way. But can a young woman be juſtly excuſed, or can ſhe fairly excuſe herſelf, if, where all is at ſtake, ſhe call not in the joint aid of wiſe ſuſpicion, friendly counſel, and grave experience, together with prayers for God's protection more than ordinarily fervent?

But, methinks, I hear ſome of you aſk, with an air of earneſt curioſity, Do not reformed libertines then make the beſt huſbands? I am ſorry for the queſtion. I am doubly ſorry, whenever it is ſtarted by a Virtuous Woman. I will not wound the ear of modeſty by drawing minutely the character of a libertine: but give me leave to anſwer your enquiry, by aſking a queſtion or two in my turn. In the firſt place, we will ſuppoſe ſuch a one really reformed, ſo far as to treat the woman he marries with eſteem and fidelity; and that he gives up for ever his old companions, at leaſt as to any choſen intimacy, or preference of their company to hers. We

grant it poſſible; we rejoice when it happens. It is certainly the beſt atonement that can be made for his former conduct. But now let me aſk you, or rather let me deſire you to aſk your own hearts, without any regard to the opinions of the world, which is moſt deſirable on the ſcore of ſentiment, on the ſcore of that reſpect which you owe to yourſelves, to your friends, to your ſex, to order, rectitude, and honour; the pure unexhauſted affection of a man who has not by intemperance and debauchery corrupted his principles, impaired his conſtitution, enſlaved himſelf to appetite, ſubmitted to ſhare with the vileſt and loweſt of mankind the mercenary embraces of harlots, contributed to embolden guilt, to harden vice, to render the retreat from a life of ſcandal and miſery more hopeleſs; who never laid ſnares for beauty, never betrayed the innocence that truſted him, never abandoned any fond creature to want and deſpair, never hurt the reputation of a

woman, never disturbed the peace of families, or defied the laws of his country, or set at nought the prohibition of his God;—which, I say, is most desirable, the affection of such a man, or that of him who has probably done all this, who has certainly done a great part of it, and who has nothing now to offer you, but the shattered remains of his health, and of his heart? How any of you may feel on this subject, I cannot say. But if, judging as a man, I believed, what I have often heard, that the generality of women would prefer the latter, I know not any thing that could sink them so low in my esteem.

That he who has been formerly a rake may after all prove a very tolerable husband, as the world goes, I have said already that I do not dispute. But I would ask, in the next place, is this commonly to be expected? Is there no danger that such a man will be tempted by the power

of long habit to return to his old ways; or that the inſatiable love of variety, which he has indulged ſo freely, will ſome time or other lead him aſtray from the fineſt woman in the world? Will not the very idea of a reſtraint, which he could never brook while ſingle, make him only the more impatient of it when married? Will he have the better opinion of his wife's virtue, that he has converſed chiefly with women who had none, and with men amongſt whom it was a favourite ſyſtem, that the ſex are all alike? But it is a painful topic. Let the women who are ſo connected make the beſt of their condition; and let us go on to ſomething elſe. If you, my honoured hearers, would preſerve your ſobriety, I would warn you,

In the ſecond place, againſt a Diſſipated Life; into which many, who I verily believe have no ill intentions, are

unhappily drawn by one engagement or another. Youth, ſprightlineſs, the love of ſociety, the love of ſhining, (the laſt particularly ſtrong in minds where imagination predominates) joined with a taſte for amuſement, which the circumſcribed ſituation of the ſex ſerves perhaps only to increaſe—all theſe put together lead them very readily into ſuch a track; moſt eſpecially if their education has lain in that line, or if their connexions, whether natural or accidental, have concurred to ſtrengthen the bias. But how innocent ſoever it may be in the firſt inſtance, who does not know, that in its after-conſequences it is often to the laſt degree hurtful?

Does it not manifeſtly breed an impatience of home, and ſuch a propenſity to ſhow, as, rather than not be gratified, ſhall balk the moſt important duties, and court the moſt improper company? Does it not tend directly to expence and profu-

ſion? Does it not unavoidably cheriſh the paſſion for idleneſs and ſauntering, ſo inconſiſtent with every thing ſolid, uſeful, and improving? Not to ſpeak now of the prejudice done by it to the health and conſtitution; is ſuch a temper, and ſuch a conduct, agreeable to the great rules of moderation? Will that mind be acquainted with wiſdom, which is averſe to thought? Will ſelf-government be her ſtudy, who flies from ſelf-inſpection? Can Religion or Virtue hope to make any laſting impreſſion on a ſpirit, that by perpetual agitation is wrought up into mere froth? What imaginable folly is there that may not find its way into a heart, like the garden of the ſluggard, thrown open to every incurſion? If your mornings be ſpent in rambling and dreſſing, your evenings in viſits and cards, or public entertainments; if this be the general tenor of your tranſactions, on which ſide, I beſeech you, can the balance be expected to lie at the bottom of the account?

But that perhaps is not your care. 'What have the young and the gay to 'do, but to divert themſelves?" Indeed! Were you ſent then into this world for no other purpoſe? Do you deſign to apply to nothing ſerious? 'Yes, certainly, 'when we are ſettled, and have families.' But pray, tell me: To act your parts properly then, is there no preparation neceſſary now? Is roving about continually the way to grow either fond of domeſtic employments, or fit for them? Will neglecting the leſſer affairs committed to you at preſent, diſpoſe or qualify you for a larger ſphere of activity hereafter?

But have we not often ſeen young women, that were thoughtleſs and profuſe, turn out very prudent and œconomical wives? We have; and what then? Would you build a ſyſtem of action on events ſo precarious and unlikely? Becauſe by the force of genius, or a felicity of circumſtances, boys who were good

for little or nothing at ſchool, have not unfrequently, in proceſs of time, ſhot up into men of ability or ſpirit, would you thence infer that youth may ſafely trifle away their early years?

But is it certain, after all, that you are to change your ſtate, as well as your character? Will the train of life we are conſidering recommend you much to young men? I have converſed with many of them on this ſubject. Shall I tell you their opinions? Some, I find, would like a ſprightly companion in marriage, but none a diſſipated one; and all of them, to a man, dread a woman of expence. I ſay not, that it is right in this caſe to count the coſt too nicely; but men that are not very violent lovers, or very great fools, will not overlook it. Our ſex of late years have been by many thought more backward than formerly to enter into the holy bands of wedlock; and what I hint at has been aſſigned as a principal cauſe.

It is too common, I confeſs, to hear thoſe who have been addicted to vagrant pleaſures, and vain profuſion, plead the ſmallneſs of their fortunes as an excuſe for not marrying; when, if they connected themſelves with women of ſobriety and diſcretion, it is perhaps demonſtrable that they would live cheaper. But what, ſay they, if, hoping to find a help meet, we ſhould wed our ruin? I anſwer them, Chooſe the better. Shall I give you their reply? 'The ladies of the preſent age 'are ſo immoderately expenſive'—You may gueſs the reſt.

But it is not only ſuch men that ſpeak this language. There are of a different character not a few, who, ſtrongly attached to the worthier part of the ſex, wiſh for nothing ſo much as an honourable connexion with them, but are reſtrained by the very conſideration in queſtion. We would willingly convince them, that they carry it too far. They appeal to

facts, and perſiſt in the argument. We are weary of the diſpute. It is inconceivable what frivolous articles of parade are inſiſted on by ſome women, of whom better things might be expected. But rivalſhip in ſhow is the ruling paſſion of the times; and how much is it nouriſhed by diſſipation!

I cannot leave this point without obſerving, that one of the worſt conſequences attending ſuch a courſe is its throwing many young ladies into the company of women, who with the general reputation of virtue, or under the particular ſhelter of matrimony, are often the very quinteſſence of vice; a ſet of ſmooth pernicious tempters, like Satan to Eve, winding themſelves by flattery into the hearts of thoſe her heedleſs daughters, deſcanting on their beauty, perfections, proſpects, and I know not what; firſt exciting, and then gratifying their youthful curioſity, with ſuch ſuggeſtions, and ſuch tales,

as ſet their fancies all on fire; by which any little ſtructure of modeſty, that Nature and Education may have raiſed, is conſumed in a moment. Which contribute moſt to their fall from innocence, thoſe ſhe ſerpents, or the male ones mentioned before, I will not determine; but remember, I have warned you againſt both.

Permit me farther, on this occaſion, juſt to remind you of poor Dinah. Secure as you may think yourſelves, none of you, I ſuppoſe, have been trained more virtuouſly than it is probable ſhe was under the eye of a pious father. But, alas! the ſpirit of wandering ſeized her. "She "went forth to ſee the daughters of the "land." She met a betrayer, and loſt her honour. But I proceed,

In the third place, to caution you againſt that fatal poiſon to virtue, which is conveyed by Profligate and by Improper Books.

When entertainment is made the vehicle of inſtruction, nothing ſurely can be more harmleſs, agreeable, or uſeful. To prohibit young minds the peruſal of any writings, where Wiſdom addreſſes the affections in the language of the imagination, may be ſometimes well meant, but muſt be always injudicious. Some ſuch writings undoubtedly there are; the offspring of real genius enlightened by knowledge of the world, and prompted, it is to be hoped, by zeal for the improvement of youth.

Happy indeed, beyond the vulgar ſtory-telling tribe, and highly to be praiſed, is he who, to fine ſenſibilities and a lively fancy ſuperadding clear and comprehenſive views of men and manners, writes to the heart with ſimplicity and chaſteneſs, through a ſeries of adventures well conducted, and relating chiefly to ſcenes in ordinary life; where the ſolid joys of Virtue, and her ſacred ſorrows, are ſtrong-

ly contraſted with the hollowneſs and the horrors of vice; where, by little unexpected yet natural incidents of the tender and domeſtic kind, ſo peculiarly fitted to touch the ſoul, the moſt important leſſons are impreſſed, and the moſt generous ſentiments awakened; where, to ſay no more, diſtreſs occaſioned often by indiſcretions, conſiſtent with many degrees of worth, yet clouding it for the time, is worked up into a ſtorm, ſuch as to call forth the principles of fortitude and wiſdom, confirming and brightening them by that exertion; till at length the burſting tempeſt is totally, or in a great meaſure diſpelled, ſo that the hitherto ſuſpended and agitated reader is either relieved entirely, and delighted even to tranſport, or has left upon his mind at the concluſion a mixture of virtuous ſadneſs, which ſerves to faſten the moral deeper, and to produce an unuſual ſobriety in all his paſſions.

Amongſt the few works of this kind which I have ſeen, I cannot but look on thoſe of Mr. Richardſon as well entitled to the firſt rank; an author, of whom an indiſputable judge has with equal truth and energy pronounced, "that he taught "the paſſions to move at the command of "reaſon:" I will venture to add, an author, to whom your ſex are under ſingular obligations for his uncommon attention to their beſt intereſts; but particularly for preſenting, in a character ſuſtained throughout with inexpreſſible pathos and delicacy, the moſt exalted ſtandard of female excellence that was ever held up to their imitation. I would be underſtood to except that part of Clariſſa's conduct, which the author meant to exhibit as exceptionable. Setting this aſide, we find in her character a beauty, a ſweetneſs, an artleſſneſs—what ſhall I ſay more?—a ſanctity of ſentiment and manner, which, I own for my part, I have never ſeen equalled in any book of that

ſort; yet ſuch, at the ſame time, as appears no way impracticable for any woman who is ambitious of excelling.

Beſide the beautiful productions of that incomparable pen, there ſeem to me to be very few, in the ſtyle of Novel, that you can read with ſafety, and yet fewer that you can read with advantage.—What ſhall we ſay of certain books, which we are aſſured (for we have not read them) are in their nature ſo ſhameful, in their tendency ſo peſtiferous, and contain ſuch rank treaſon againſt the royalty of Virtue, ſuch horrible violation of all decorum, that ſhe who can bear to peruſe them muſt in her ſoul be a proſtitute, let her reputation in life be what it will. But can it be true—ſay, ye chaſte ſtars, that with innumerable eyes inſpect the midnight behaviour of mortals—can it be true, that any young woman, pretending to decency, ſhould endure for a moment to

look on this infernal brood of futility and lewdneſs?

Nor do we condemn thoſe writings only, that, with an effrontery which defies the laws of God and men, carry on their very forehead the mark of the beaſt. We conſider the general run of Novels as utterly unfit for you. Inſtruction they convey none. They paint ſcenes of pleaſure and paſſion altogether improper for you to behold, even with the mind's eye. Their deſcriptions are often looſe and luſcious in a high degree; their repreſentations of love between the ſexes are almoſt univerſally overſtrained. All is dotage, or deſpair; or elſe ranting ſwelled into burleſque. In ſhort, the majority of their lovers are either mere lunatics, or mock-heroes. A ſweet ſenſibility, a charming tenderneſs, a delightful anguiſh, exalted generoſity, heroic worth, and refinement of thought; how ſeldom are theſe beſt ingredients of virtuous love

mixed with any judgment or care in the compoſition of their principal characters!

In the Old Romance the paſſion appeared with all its enthuſiaſm. But then it was the enthuſiaſm of honour; for love and honour were there the ſame. The men were ſincere, magnanimous, and noble; the women were patterns of chaſtity, dignity, and affection. They were only to be won by real heroes; and this title was founded in protecting, not in betraying, the ſex. The proper merit with them conſiſted in the diſplay of diſintereſted goodneſs, undaunted fortitude, and unalterable fidelity. The turn of thoſe books was influenced by the genius of the times in which they were compoſed; as that, on the other hand, was nouriſhed by them. The characters they drew were, no doubt, often heightened beyond nature; and the incidents they related, it is certain, were commonly blended with

the moſt ridiculous extravagance. At preſent, however, I believe they may be read with perfect ſafety, if indeed there be any who chooſe to look into them.

The times in which we live are in no danger of adopting a ſyſtem of romantic virtue. The parents of the preſent generation, what with ſelling their ſons and daughters in marriage, and what with teaching them by every poſſible means the glorious principles of Avarice, have contrived pretty effectually to bring down from its former flights that idle, youthful, unprofitable paſſion, which has for its object perſonal attractions, in preference to all the wealth of the world. With the ſucceſsful endeavours of thoſe profoundly politic parents, the levity of diſſipation, the vanity of parade, and the fury of gaming, now ſo prevalent, have concurred to cure completely in the faſhionable of both ſexes any tendency to mutual fondneſs.

What has a modiſh young gentleman to do with thoſe antiquated notions of gallantry, that were connected with veneration for female excellence, invincible honour, and unſpotted fame? Is it not enough for him, if he intend to ſtrike the matrimonial bargain, that by himſelf, or an old cunning father, he can drive a good one, to get poſſeſſion of ſome woman, whoſe fortune joined to his own, if any he have, ſhall enable him to glitter in public, and in private to gratify other favourite inclinations more freely? Provided theſe grand points are gained, in the perſon he thus trafficks for to be the partner of his life, what ſignifies her appearance, her underſtanding, or her character? And thoſe Fine Ladies who ſeek conqueſt only for ſhow, too well inſtructed in the ſuperior conſequence of that to put any value on ſo ſimple a thing as a Heart, merely for its own ſake; what elſe have they to mind but ſecuring, by whatever arts, ſuch ſettlements as ſhall place them,

when married, on a level with their companions, or if poſſible above them, in the all-important articles of gaiety and ſplendor? As to men's hazarding any thing in the defence of girls who may take it into their heads to think of reputation, delicacy, ſentiment, and other ſuch exploded ideas; what can be ſo fooliſh?—although to hazard their lives in a drunken quarrel for a proſtitute might perhaps be brave!

That in ſo polite an age the elevations of love, the ſanctity of truth, and the majeſty of virtue, ſhould paſs for knight-errantry, cannot be ſurpriſing; nor is it any wonder, that the very beſt things, in the productions laſt mentioned, ſhould be no way intereſting to a modern reader, whoſe taſte and manners are formed on ſtandards far different. Some however may not be diſpleaſed to hear the opinion of no leſs a judge than Milton concerning them. It ſeems they were one of his early ſtudies, and that on a moral account. As his

words to this purpoſe are remarkable, and not much known, I ſhall take the liberty to quote part of them. " I betook me " among thoſe lofty fables and romances, " which recount in ſolemn cantos the " deeds of knighthood founded by our " victorious kings, and from hence had in " renown over all Chriſtendom. There " I read it in the oath of every knight, " that he ſhould defend to the expence of " his blood, or of his life, if it ſo befell " him, the honour and chaſtity of virgin " or matron. From whence even then I " learnt, what a noble virtue chaſtity ſure " muſt be, to the defence of which ſo " many worthies by ſuch a dear adven- " ture of themſelves had ſworn. And if " I found in the ſtory afterwards any of " them by word or deed breaking that " oath, I judged it the ſame fault of the " poet as that which is attributed to Ho- " mer, to have written undecent things " of the Gods. Only this my mind gave " me, that every free and gentle ſpirit,

"without that oath, ought to be born a "knight, nor needed to expect the gilt "ſpur, or the laying of a ſword upon "his ſhoulder, to ſtir him up both by his "counſel and his arm to ſecure and pro- "tect the weakneſs of any attempted "chaſtity."

To come back to the ſpecies of writing which ſo many young women are apt to doat upon, the offspring of our preſent Noveliſts, I mean the greater part; with whom we may join the common herd of Play-writers. Beſide the remarks already made on the former, is it not manifeſt with reſpect to both, that ſuch books lead to a falſe taſte of life and happineſs; that they repreſent vices as frailties, and frailties as virtues; that they engender notions of love unſpeakably perverting and inflammatory; that they overlook in a great meaſure the fineſt part of the paſſion, which one would ſuſpect the authors had never experienced; that they turn it moſt

commonly into an affair of wicked or of frivolous gallantry; that on many occaſions they take off from the worſt crimes committed in the proſecution of it, the horror which ought ever to follow them; on ſome occaſions actually reward thoſe very crimes, and almoſt on all leave the female readers with this perſuaſion at beſt, that it is their buſineſs to get huſbands at any rate, and by whatever means? Add to the account, that repentance for the fouleſt injuries which can be done the ſex, is generally repreſented as the pang, or rather the ſtart, of a moment; and holy wedlock converted into a ſponge, to wipe out at a ſingle ſtroke every ſtain of guilt and diſhonour, which it was poſſible for the hero of the piece to contract.——Is this a kind of reading calculated to improve the principles, or preſerve the Sobriety, of female minds? How much are thoſe young women to be pitied, that have no wiſe parents or faithful tutors to direct them in relation to the books which

are, or which are not, fit for them to read! How much are thoſe parents and tutors to be commended, who with particular ſolicitude watch over them in ſo important a concern!

I conclude with ſaying, that the ſubject of this diſcourſe has unavoidably ſuggeſted ſome ideas, which, had we not undertaken to addreſs young women at large, we ſhould have certainly ſuppreſſed for the ſake of more modeſt natures, whom we would not willingly pain, no not for a moment. But ſuch we hope will be candid enough to excuſe us, if, by throwing out to others what to them would have been unneceſſary, we may be happily inſtrumental in reſcuing were it but one of their ſex from the ſlavery of vice, or defending a ſingle innocent from its ſnares.

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SERMON V.

ON

FEMALE VIRTUE,

FRIENDSHIP,

AND CONVERSATION.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON V.

On Female Virtue, Friendſhip, and Converſation.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themſelves with Sobriety.

COL. iv. 6.

Let your Speech be always with Grace, ſeaſoned with Salt.

TO preſerve the Sobriety enjoined by our apoſtle, there is required a poſitive diſcipline, as well as the negative part already explained. Be not alarmed at the name of Diſcipline. In what we are going to propoſe you will find nothing forbidding or harſh. We do not, you may believe, wiſh to ſee you cut off from

the friendly intercourſe and innocent delights of ſociety, confined to convents, as millions of your ſex moſt unnaturally are in popiſh countries, and there condemned to the idle yet fatiguing taſk of a devotion unreaſonable in many reſpects, unintereſting in moſt, feeble for want of temptation, viſionary and dry at the ſame time. The genuine intention of piety was certainly to make its diſciples amiable, uſeful, and happy; to give ſolidity to every virtue, and grace to every relation of human life. Is it poſſible to reflect on the prodigious multitudes of women ſhut up in thoſe dens of ſuperſtition, without feeling horror at a ſyſtem which, under the guiſe of ſuperior ſanctity, ſacrifices to hopeleſs ſolitude, frequently in all the flower of youth and beauty, ſuch ſwarms of helpleſs beings; who, had they remained in the world, might have been the ornament of their own ſex, the delight of ours, the mothers of a numerous race, and bleſſings to every country where they dwell?

Of the colours with which this cruel practice is disguised by the church of Rome we are not ignorant: and we can even conceive, that the prepossessions of art, and the softenings of habit; their commerce with one another, their employments in their prison, and often, I doubt not, the ardour of a well-meaning though much mistaken zeal; that all these may have the power to reconcile many of them to a state, otherwise gloomy beyond expression. But what shall be said for the situation of the rest; and what can justify the flagrant opposition of such a system to the sacred laws of social duty, and the truly benevolent, joyful, and active spirit of the religion of Jesus, as taught and exemplified by himself and his apostles?

But to proceed in our plan. From dangerous connexions, from a dissipated life, and from books of a corrupting tendency, we attempted to put you upon your guard

in our laſt diſcourſe. In the preſent we will endeavour to point out that Society or Converſation, and in ſome following ones thoſe Talents or Accompliſhments, which will contribute at once to fortify you againſt ſuch ſnares, if they ſhould fall in your way; to ſubdue any propenſities that might expoſe you too raſhly to their influence; to ſtrengthen all your virtuous reſolves; and to ſupply inexhauſted ſources of ſolid, rational, and refined entertainment.

As to the Converſation which you ought with theſe views to cultivate, it may be proper,

Firſt of all, to ſay ſomewhat concerning thoſe Early Friendſhips with one another, that uſually lead you to the moſt intimate communications. I take it for granted, there is no young woman who has not, or wiſhes not to have, a companion of her own ſex, to whom ſhe may unboſom

herſelf on every occaſion. That there are women capable of friendſhip with women, I cannot, for my part, queſtion in the leaſt. I have ſeen indubitable proofs of it, and thoſe carried as far as ſeemed compatible with the imperfections of our common nature. I know it is queſtioned by many men; while others believe, that it happens exceedingly ſeldom. Between married and unmarried women, I hope it happens very often. Whether it does ſo between thoſe that are ſingle, I confeſs myſelf a little doubtful. The preacher will be probably charged with partiality to his own ſex, when he adds, that, ſo far as he has been able to obſerve, young men have appeared more frequently ſuſceptible of a generous and ſteady friendſhip for each other, than females as yet unconnected; eſpecially if the latter have had, or been ſuppoſed to have, pretenſions to beauty not yet adjuſted by the public.

Having profeſſed himſelf however, what (as often as truth will permit him) he really is, an advocate for the ſex, and this being the feature in their character which ſeems to him the moſt unfavourable, he is willing to find out whether in their frame and condition, compared with thoſe of the men, there be any circumſtances which may help towards an apology; and he argues in the following manner.

The ſtate of matrimony is neceſſary to the ſupport, order, and comfort of ſociety. But it is a ſtate, that ſubjects the women to a great variety of ſolicitude and pain. Nothing could carry them through it with any tolerable ſatisfaction or ſpirit, but very ſtrong and almoſt unconquerable attachments. To produce theſe, is it not fit they ſhould be peculiarly ſenſible to the attention and regards of the men? Upon the ſame ground, does it not ſeem agreeable to the purpoſes of Providence that the ſecuring of this attention, and theſe re-

gards, ſhould be a principal aim? But can ſuch an aim be purſued without frequent competition? And will not that too readily occaſion jealouſy, envy, and all the unamiable effects of mutual rivalſhip? I mean, without the reſtraints of ſuperior worth and ſentiment. But can theſe be ordinarily expected from the prevailing turn of female education, or from the little pains that women, as well as other human beings, commonly take to controul themſelves, and to act nobly? In this laſt reſpect, the ſexes appear pretty much on the ſame footing: in others, it is manifeſt, that the nature and ſituation of the men are very different. Their conſtitution of mind, no leſs than of body, is for the moſt part hardy and rough. By means of both, by the demands of life, and by the impulſe of paſſion, they are engaged in a vaſt diverſity of purſuits, from which your ſex are precluded by decorum, by ſoftneſs, and by fear. This diverſity of daily purſuits, joined with the multipli-

city of female objects that freer modes of living present to their imagination, and the power they have of unlimited choice whenever they are disposed to make it (a power which Nature probably, and Custom certainly, have denied to the others); all this put together must in the case of our sex be productive of very different effects.

Do I mean by this reasoning to justify in yours the indulgence of those little, and, I must needs say, in many instances, base passions towards one another, with which they have been so generally charged? God forbid. I only mean to represent such passions in the first approach, and while not entertained, as less criminal than the men are apt to state them; and to prove, that, in their attachments to each other, the latter have not always that merit above the poor women, which they are apt to claim. In the mean time it will be your business, by emulating them

where they appear good-natured and diſintereſted, to diſprove their imputation, and to ſhow a temper open to Friendſhip, as well as to Love.

To talk much of the latter is natural for both; to talk much of the former, is conſidered as one way of doing themſelves honour. Friendſhip, they well know, is that dignified form, which in ſpeculation at leaſt every heart muſt reverence. But in friendſhip, as in religion, which in many reſpects it reſembles, ſpeculation is often ſubſtituted in the place of practice. People fancy themſelves poſſeſſed of the thing, and hope that others will fancy ſo too, becauſe they are fond of the name, and have learnt to talk about it with plauſibility. Such talk indeed impoſes, till experience gives it the lie.

To ſay the truth, there ſeems in either ſex but little of what a fond imagination, unacquainted with the falſhood of the

world, and warmed by affections which its ſelfiſhneſs has not yet chilled, would reckon Friendſhip. In theory the ſtandard is raiſed too high; yet, methinks, I would not have it ſet much lower. I would not, on any account, have the honeſt ſenſibilities of ingenuous nature checked by the over-cautious documents of political prudence. No advantage, obtained by ſuch frigidity, can compenſate the want of thoſe warm effuſions of the heart into the boſom of a friend, which are doubtleſs among the moſt exquiſite pleaſures; at the ſame time that it muſt be owned they often, by the inevitable lot of humanity, make way for the bittereſt pains which the breaſt can experience. Happy beyond the common condition of her ſex is ſhe, who has found a Friend indeed; open-hearted yet diſcreet, generouſly fervent yet ſteady, thoroughly virtuous but not ſevere, wiſe and chearful at the ſame time! Can ſuch a friend be loved too much, or cheriſhed too tenderly? If to excellence, as well

as happineſs, there be any one way more compendious than another, next to friendſhip with the great Almighty, it is this.

But when a mixture of minds ſo beautiful and ſo bleſſed takes place, it is generally, if not always, the reſult of early prepoſſeſſion, caſual intercourſe, ſecret ſympathy, inexplicable attraction, or elſe a combination of ſuch cauſes as are not to be brought together by management or deſign. This noble plant may be cultivated; but it muſt grow ſpontaneouſly. I can only therefore wiſh to each of you, beloved, the felicity of finding ſuch a friend; and, having found her, the wiſdom to uſe her well.

For the more general commerce of ſocial life, a few advices may not be improper. That, like the ordinary duties of religion, may be directed with tolerable advantage by human precepts. The harmonies of holy friendſhip, like the ſub-

limer contemplations of the Divinity, muſt depend more immediately on that hand, which can alone attune the finer movements, and exalt the beſt conceptions of the ſoul. Let us go on then,

In the ſecond place, to what we may term the common tenor of your Company; which, for the ſake of our ſubject, we muſt ſuppoſe left in ſome meaſure to your own choice. That it ought to be ſuch as ſhall not corrupt your good manners, is a principle already eſtabliſhed. It will be likewiſe underſtood, that, in the ſociety you chooſe to frequent, you will ſeek for that ſtyle of virtue which is moſt adapted to the turn of your own minds. But this laſt propenſity ſhould not, I apprehend, be indulged too far. I will explain myſelf.

The more intimate reciprocations of a cloſe friendſhip are now, as you know, out of the queſtion. That at your time

of life you ſhould be particularly fond of ſprightly converſation, where all is enlivened and joyful, and where Wiſdom when allowed to enter puts on her gayeſt garb, is perfectly natural. To adviſe you againſt it were as weak, as it would be unfriendly. Such ſprightlineſs and freedom, when ſupported by ſenſe, and chaſtened by decency, have always, I frankly acknowledge, appeared to me delightful. Dulneſs and inſipidity, moroſeneſs and rigour, are dead weights on every kind of ſocial intercourſe; nor will I conceal it from you that I wiſh, as much as any of you can do, to make my eſcape from them on all occaſions. But tell me, my lively friends; when the heart overflows with gaiety, is there no danger of its burſting the proper bounds? Is not extreme vivacity a near borderer on folly? To prevent its breaking looſe, and throwing itſelf into very ſerious inconveniencies, into a very hurtful conduct, will ſurely require the check of ſelf-command. But

how is that to be attained? By aſſociating only with the fanciful, the vivacious, or the witty? Is hazard to be ſhunned by ruſhing into the field of battle? Or, to repreſent things at the beſt, is familiarity with Wiſdom to be contracted moſt readily, where Wiſdom appears moſt ſeldom? Would ye form habits of ſobriety, a ſpirit of ſedateneſs, no way inconſiſtent with innocent mirth, you muſt frequently reſort to the company of the ſober and the ſedate. But will not theſe be chiefly found among ſuch as are farther advanced in years than yourſelves? Should not you be ambitious of profiting by their experience and knowledge? And will not a reſpect for ſuperior age, when poſſeſſed of ſuperior diſcretion, often prove a ſeaſonable reſtraint on the wildneſs of more youthful ſallies? "He that walketh with "wiſe men ſhall be wiſe," ſaid the wiſeſt of mortals. Is not the maxim equally applicable to women?

Will you give me leave on this occaſion to mention, what is much to the honour of our ſex, that all the moſt ſenſible and worthy of yours have ever profeſſed a particular reliſh for the converſation of men of ſenſe and worth? Such men, I preſume, are attached to the ſociety of ſuch women beyond every thing elſe in the world. And when circumſtances favour, this mutual tendency cannot fail to be a rich ſource of mutual improvement. Was not ſuch reciprocal aid a great part of Nature's intention in that mental and moral difference of ſex, which ſhe has marked by characters no leſs diſtinguiſhable than thoſe that diverſify their outward forms?

To adopt the language of an amiable writer, who has ſtudied the human heart with ſucceſs: "We believe that it is "proper for perſons of the ſame age, of "the ſame ſex, of ſimilar diſpoſitions "and purſuits, to aſſociate together. But

"here we ſeem to be deceived by words.
"If we conſult nature and common
"ſenſe, we ſhall find, that the true pro-
"priety and harmony of ſocial life de-
"pends upon the connexion of people of
"different diſpoſitions and characters ju-
"diciouſly blended together. Nature
"hath made no individual, nor no claſs
"of people, independant of the reſt of
"their ſpecies, or ſufficient for their own
"happineſs. Each ſex, each character,
"each period of life, have their ſeveral
"advantages and diſadvantages; and that
"union is the happieſt and moſt proper,
"where wants are mutually ſupplied.
"The fair ſex ſhould naturally expect
"to gain from our converſation know-
"ledge, wiſdom, and ſedateneſs; and
"they ſhould give us in exchange hu-
"manity, politeneſs, chearfulneſs, taſte,
"and ſentiment." He adds, "The le-
"vity, the raſhneſs, and folly of early life,
"are tempered with the gravity, the cau-
"tion, and the wiſdom of age; while

"the timidity, coldneſs of heart, and "languor incident to declining years, are "ſupported and aſſiſted by the courage, "the warmth, and the vivacity of youth."

The converſation of people older than yourſelves will be often accompanied with leſs joy at the moment; but afterwards it will make abundant compenſation. It will produce more recollection: and be aſſured, my ſiſters, thoſe are the trueſt pleaſures which are taſted by a mind compoſed and ſerious. In that ſituation, every thing is felt more ſtrongly. A diſſipated ſpirit is too ſuperficial to be capable of deep or permanent delight. Beſides, as has been already hinted, the experience and maturity of more years will enlarge your underſtandings, at the ſame time that they will repreſs your vanity and preſumption; while the ſportiveneſs peculiar to youth will, on your part, enliven the ſerioufneſs of age. And if thoſe, whom you thus reſpectfully cultivate, have any

good nature, they will certainly treat you with condeſcenſion and forbearance. I ſaid Good nature; for whatever excludes that, is ſure to loſe all the influence, as well as praiſe of wiſdom.

On this principle, I would particularly recommend to you the company of thoſe, whoſe piety is of the moſt chearful and the moſt charitable ſtrain. They are ſtrangers to human nature, who would affright the young by the frown of auſterity. True religion ever was, and ever will be, of the friendly kind. It is not zeal, but bigotry, that refuſes to make allowance for juvenile ſpirits and gayer tempers. Could the old be convinced by us, there is nothing we ſhould be at greater pains to impreſs upon them than this, That as chearfulneſs is the moſt natural effect of real goodneſs, it is alſo its moſt powerful recommendation. Wiſdom is never ſo attractive as when ſhe ſmiles.

But do not, my dear hearers, conceive an unfavourable opinion of that venerable form, if in the virtue of your mothers and aunts you ſhould happen to find a defect of good humour. Conſider the conſequences of declining health, diſagreeable accidents, the death of their beſt friends, frequent inactivity and depreſſion after a life of action and enjoyment. If you can look forward ſo far as a few years at moſt, it will be right for you to think what you may probably feel at their age. And pray remember, that if you require and expect allowances to be made for ſtarts of ill humour in yourſelves, at a ſeaſon when all ſhould be naturally ſoft and gentle, it is but fair at leaſt that you ſhould excuſe the ſame in thoſe who, not to inſiſt now on their other claims, are objects of tender ſympathy, as being invaded by languor, infirmity, and affliction.

I cannot however omit to caution them againſt giving way too eaſily to that pee-

viſhneſs, which is apt to grow upon them from theſe circumſtances; and to remind them, that in ſuch as have ſurvived the lively taſte of delight themſelves, there is nothing ſo noble or pleaſing, as not to diſcourage others who ſtill retain it, but on the contrary to ſhow a generous ſatisfaction in ſeeing and making young people happy. Ah! my reſpected friends, why would you ever forfeit this higheſt honour of an excellent temper? Why would you ever render your company forbidding, or aſſiſt in the ravage which Nature is unavoidably making on your attractions? Why rob Religion of that engaging appearance, which is not only her native appearance, but ſo peculiary neceſſary to promote her intereſt with unexperienced minds, in oppoſition to the wiles of her laughing rival? You will hardly believe how much harm is done by this conduct to the beſt of cauſes.

The world will judge of piety by its profeſſors. The proceeding is often un-

ſair; becauſe they are often unlike that which they profeſs. But there is no poſſibility of preventing it. The young have heard religion repreſented as an enemy to joy and affability. Nothing can be more unjuſt. Inſtead therefore of confirming thoſe prejudices, it becomes you to confute them by the only argument that will thoroughly convince, the chearfulneſs of your diſcourſe, and the mildneſs of your demeanour. In this way you may hope to do great good. When "Wiſdom is "thus juſtified of her children," they who are yet ſtrangers to her will be induced to venerate an authority that appears ſo condeſcending, and to ſtudy precepts that are productive of ſuch happineſs. But to return to my young hearers, allow me,

In the third place, to offer you a few hints on the ſpirit and manner, in which I conceive your Converſation ſhould be conducted. And now perhaps you imagine

we want to preclude every degree of that which paſſes under the name of Trifling. You are miſtaken. We do not expect that women ſhould always utter grave ſentences, nor men neither. It were inconſiſtent with the ſtate of mankind. It cannot be expected from philoſophers of the firſt rank; nor if it could, do I know that it would be deſirable. I am even inclined to believe, that they who underſtand the art of what has been termed Trifling agreeably, have gained a very conſiderable point. The frailty of human nature, and the infelicity of human life, require to be relieved and ſoothed. There are many occaſions, on which this is not to be done by ſage admonitions, or ſolemn reflexions. Theſe, to well diſpoſed minds, are often highly ſolacing; but to dwell on them always were to ſtrain the machine beyond its powers. Beſides, in fact, a ſeaſonable diverſion to anxiety, a temporary forgetfulneſs of grief, is frequently a far better method to remove it, than any

direct application or laboured remedy. To change the metaphor; when the road proves rugged, or is in danger of growing tedious, one ſucceſsful method of beguiling it is for the travellers to chear and amuſe one another by the play of fancy, and the facetiouſneſs of mirth. But then the end of the journey muſt not be forgotten. Becauſe we are weak, there is no reaſon why we ſhould be ſilly. The brow of care may ſurely be ſmoothed without converting it into the laugh of folly. While we indulge the recreation neceſſary for mortal, let us maintain the temper requiſite in immortal beings. To reconcile theſe two things, and to blend them happily, ſeems the proper ſcience of creatures on their progreſs through time to eternity. From you, my gentle friends, we look for every thing that, next to the diviner influence of religion, can ſoften the inequality, and animate the dulneſs of the way.

We wish to see you often smile; but we would not have you smile always, if it were possible. There are many scenes that demand a grave deportment; there are not few that call for a mournful one. She that cannot distinguish between laughter and happiness, never knew what the latter means. She that cannot "weep with them that weep," as well as "rejoice with them that rejoice," is a stranger to one of the sweetest sources of enjoyment, no less than to one of the noblest lessons of Christianity. Those are the happiest dispositions, which are the best. Benevolence is the supreme perfection of the ever-blessed Deity. He is infinitely removed from every painful impression. Yet scripture, in the style of accommodation, ascribes to him all the guiltless emotions of humanity: and we know that our Saviour was formerly on earth, and is now in heaven, "touch-"ed with the feeling of our infirmities."

With the character of a Chriſtian Woman nothing, methinks, can better correſpond than a propenſity to melt into affectionate ſorrow. It becomes alike her religion and her ſex. Never, my fair auditory, never do your eyes ſhine with a more delightful effulgence, than when ſuffuſed with all the trembling ſoftneſs of grief for virtue in diſtreſs, or of ſolicitude for friendſhip in danger. Believe me, if the gaiety of converſation gave place ſomewhat oftener to the tender tale of wo, you would not, to ſuch at leaſt of your male acquaintance as have hearts, appear at all the leſs lovely. The ſigh of compaſſion ſtealing from a female breaſt, on the mention of calamity, would be rather more muſical in their ears, than the loud burſts of unmeaning laughter, with which they are often entertained. Let me add here, that the charms of innocence and ſympathy appearing in your diſcourſe will, to every diſcerning man, ſpread

around you a luſtre which all the jewels in the world cannot beſtow.

The diamond's and the ruby's blaze
Diſputes the palm with beauty's queen:
Not beauty's queen commands ſuch praiſe,
Devoid of virtue if ſhe's ſeen.

But the ſoft tear in Pity's eye
Outſhines the diamond's brighteſt beams;
But the ſweet bluſh of Modeſty
More beauteous than the ruby ſeems.

If we ſpeak of improvement; merciful Redeemer, how edifying to the ſoul is this generous ſenſibility! "It is better "to go to the houſe of mourning than "to the houſe of feaſting: for that is "the end of all men, and the living will "lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than "laughter: for by the ſadneſs of the "countenance the heart is made better. "The heart of the wiſe is in the houſe "of mourning; but the heart of fools is "in the houſe of mirth. As the crackling

" of thorns under a pot, ſo is the laugh-
" ter of a fool. This alſo is vanity."
You know who ſaid ſo—The man who had ſpent many a day, and many a night, in the bower of voluptuouſneſs, far from the cries of miſery, and the moans of complaint; who gat him " men-ſingers
" and women-ſingers, and the delights
" of the ſons of men;" who had, times without number, ſaid in his heart, " Go
" to now, I will prove thee with mirth,
" therefore enjoy pleaſure;" who ſought by a prudent uſe of wine to exalt his own ſpirits, and to promote the hilarity of thoſe about him; in a word, who kept not from his eyes whatſoever they deſired, nor with-held his heart from any joy. This, I ſay, was the man whom experience, as well as inſpiration prompted to give the preference you have juſt now heard. There is—yes, there is attendant on virtuous ſadneſs a ſenſation which, in point of indulgence and elevation at once, is ſuperior to all that was ever felt by a

ſight mind, in the flush of feſtivity, or amidſt the triumph of wit.

Having mentioned Wit, let me proceed to warn you againſt the affectation and the abuſe of it. Here our text from the Coloſſians comes in with propriety, "Let "your Speech be always with Grace, ſea- "ſoned with Salt." Theſe remarkable words were addreſſed to chriſtians in general. They are conſidered by the beſt commentators, as an exhortation to that kind of converſe, which, both for matter and manner, ſhall appear moſt graceful, and prove moſt acceptable; being tempered by courteouſneſs and modeſty, ſeaſoned with wiſdom and diſcretion, that like ſalt will ſerve, at the ſame inſtant, to prevent its corruption and heighten its flavour. How beautiful this precept in itſelf! How uſeful and pleaſing in the practice! How peculiarly fit to be practiſed by you, my female friends, on the turn of whoſe converſation and deportment ſo

much depends to yourſelves, and all about you! From what I have now to offer, it will be found likewiſe to come, with advantage, in aid of our leading doctrine; ſince there are not perhaps many worſe foes to that Sobriety of ſpirit, which we would ſtill inculcate, than the abuſe and affectation already mentioned.

It is not my deſign to gather up, if I could, the profuſion of flowers that have been ſcattered by innumerable hands on this tempting theme; and by which thoſe very hands have, in their own caſe, ſhown how difficult it is to reſiſt the temptation. I would only obſerve, that the dangerous talent in queſtion has been well compared to the dancing of a meteor, that blazes, allures, and miſleads. Moſt certainly it alone can never be a ſteady light; and too probably it is often a fatal one. Of thoſe who have reſigned themſelves to its guidance, how few has it not betrayed into great indiſcretions at leaſt,

by inflaming their thirſt of applauſe; by rendering them little nice in their choice of company; by ſeducing them into ſtrokes of ſatire, too offenſive to the perſons againſt whom they were levelled, not to be repelled upon the authors with full vengeance; and finally, by making them, in conſequence of that heat which produces, and that vanity which foſters it, forgetful of thoſe cool and moderate rules that ought to regulate their conduct!

A very few there may have been, endowed with judgment and temper ſufficient to reſtrain them from indulging "the raſh dexterity of wit," and to direct it to purpoſes equally agreeable and beneficial. But one thing is certain, that witty men for the moſt part have had few friends, though many admirers. Their converſation has been courted, while their abilities have been feared, or their characters hated, or both. In truth the laſt have ſeldom merited affection,

even when the firſt have excited eſteem. Sometimes their hearts have been ſo bad, as at length to bring their heads into diſgrace. At any rate, the faculty termed Wit is commonly looked upon with a ſuſpicious eye, as a two-edged ſword, from which not even the ſacredneſs of friendſhip can ſecure. It is eſpecially, I think, dreaded in women. In a Mrs. Rowe, I dare ſay, it was not. To great brilliancy of imagination that female angel joined yet greater goodneſs of diſpoſition; and never wrote, nor, as I have been told, was ever ſuppoſed to have ſaid, in her whole life, an ill-natured, or even an indelicate thing. Of ſuch a woman, with all her talents, none could be afraid. In her company, it muſt have been impoſſible not to feel reſpect; but then it would be like that, which the pious man entertains for a miniſtring ſpirit from heaven, a reſpect full of confidence and joy. If aught on earth can preſent the image of celeſtial excellence in its ſofteſt

array, it is ſurely an Accompliſhed Woman, in whom purity and meekneſs, intelligence and modeſty, mingle their charms. But when I ſpeak on this ſubject, need I tell you, that men of the beſt ſenſe have been uſually averſe to the thought of marrying a witty female?

You will probably tell me, they were afraid of being outſhone; and ſome of them perhaps might be ſo. But I am apt to believe, that many of them acted on different motives. Men who underſtand the ſcience of domeſtic happineſs, know that its very firſt principle is eaſe. Of that indeed we grow fonder, in whatever condition, as we advance in life, and as the heat of youth abates. But we cannot be eaſy, where we are not ſafe. We are never ſafe in the company of a critic; and almoſt every wit is a critic by profeſſion. In ſuch company we are not at liberty to unbend ourſelves. All muſt be the ſtraining of ſtudy, or the anxiety of ap-

prehension: how painful! Where the heart may not expand and open itſelf with freedom, farewel to real friendſhip, farewel to convivial delight! But to ſuffer this reſtraint at home, what miſery! From the brandiſhings of wit in the hand of ill-nature, of imperious paſſion, or of unbounded vanity, who would not flee? But when that weapon is pointed at a huſband, is it to be wondered if from his own houſe he takes ſhelter in the tavern? He ſought a ſoft friend; he expected to be happy in a reaſonable companion. He has found a perpetual ſatiriſt, or a ſelf-ſufficient prattler. How have I pitied ſuch a man, when I have ſeen him in continual fear on his own account, and that of his friends, and for the poor lady herſelf; leſt, in the run of her diſcourſe, ſhe ſhould be guilty of ſome petulance, or ſome indiſcretion, that would expoſe her and hurt them all! But take the matter at the beſt; there is ſtill all the difference in the world

between the entertainer of an evening, and a partner for life. Of the latter a ſober mind, ſteady attachment, and gentle manners, joined to a good underſtanding, will ever be the chief recommendations; whereas the qualities that ſparkle will be often ſufficient for the former.

As to the affectation of wit, one can hardly ſay, whether it be moſt ridiculous or hurtful. The abuſe of it, which we have been juſt conſidering, we are ſometimes, perhaps too often, inclined to forgive, for the ſake of that amuſement which in ſpite of all the improprieties mentioned it yet affords. The other is univerſally contemptible and odious. Who is not ſhocked by the flippant impertinence of a ſelf-conceited woman, that wants to dazzle by the ſuppoſed ſuperiority of her powers? If you, my fair ones, have knowledge and capacity; let it be ſeen, by your not affecting to ſhow them, that

you have ſomething much more valuable, humility and wiſdom.

"Naked in nothing ſhould a woman be,
"But veil her very wit with modeſty.
"Let man diſcover, let not her diſplay,
"But yield her charms of mind with ſweet
"delay."

Muſt women then keep ſilence in the houſe, as well as in the church? By no means. There may indeed be many caſes, in which it will particularly become a young lady to obſerve the apoſtolic rule, "Be ſwift to hear, and ſlow to ſpeak:" but there are many too, wherein it will be no leſs fit, that with an unaſſuming air ſhe ſhould endeavour to ſupport and enliven the converſation. It is the opinion of ſome, that girls ſhould never ſpeak before company, when their parents are preſent; and parents there are, ſo deficient in underſtanding, as to make this a rule.

How then ſhall thoſe girls learn to acquit themſelves properly in their abſence? It is hard if you cannot diſtinguiſh, and teach your daughters to diſtinguiſh, between good breeding and pertneſs, between an obliging ſtudy to pleaſe and an indecent deſire to put themſelves forward, between a laudable inquiſitiveneſs and an improper curioſity. But this, I confeſs, is not the moſt common miſtake in the education of young women; and they muſt permit me to ſay, that it were well if the generality of mothers were careful by prudent inſtruction in private, to repreſs that talkative humour which runs away with ſo many of them, and never quits them all their life after, for want of being curbed in their early years. But what words can expreſs the impertinence of a female tongue let looſe into boundleſs loquacity? Nothing can be more ſtunning, except where a number of Fine Ladies open at once——Protect us, ye powers of gentleneſs and decorum, pro-

tect us from the diſguſt of ſuch a ſcene—— Ah! my dear hearers, if ye knew how terrible it appears to a male ear of the leaſt delicacy, I think you would take care never to practiſe it.

For endleſs prattling, and loud diſcourſe, no degree of capacity can atone. I join them together, becauſe in effect they are ſeldom ſeparate. But the noiſy, empty, trivial chatter of everlaſting folly—it is too much for human patience to ſuſtain. How different from that playful ſpirit in converſation, ſpoken of before; which, blended with good ſenſe and kept within reaſonable bounds, contributes, like the lighter and more careleſs touches in a picture, to give an air of eaſe and freedom to the whole! This freedom and eaſe, when accompanied with decency and variety, a certain native prettineſs and unſtudied correctneſs, are among the moſt pleaſing characteriſtics of female ſociety in its beſt ſhape.

Your talking ſo much about dreſs, and faſhions, and faſhionable amuſements, as the far greater part of you are ever doing, in preference to better ſubjects, is, to ſay the ſofteſt thing of it, a weakneſs which cannot be juſtified, but which perhaps muſt, in ſome meaſure, be forgiven to your ſex. As to the love of ſcandal and diſpute, which may be called the Acid of ſpeech, in contradiſtinction to the Salt recommended by our apoſtle, it muſt be reſerved for a future conſideration. The men, indeed, are ready to triumph at the very mention of it. Whether they have reaſon to triumph on the whole, may be a difficult queſtion. The agreeable qualities named a moment ago, they muſt fairly give up to the women. How few of them in compariſon poſſeſs, or at leaſt exerciſe, the power of keeping diſcourſe alive, without aſſiſtance from wine, from politics, from buſineſs, from the news of the day, and from another theme, for which their unreſtrained and inextinguiſhable paſſion, in male company, argues

leſcent of ſoul, a degradation of thought, whereof men endowed with the leaſt underſtanding ought to be aſhamed!

I juſt mentioned Unſtudied Correctneſs as appropriated to the converſation of cultivated women. I mean that eaſy elegance of ſpeech, which reſults from clear and lively ideas, expreſſed with the ſimplicity of nature, ſomewhat aided by the knowledge of books. To this the beſt ſcholars amongſt the men muſt ſeldom or never lay claim. It is neceſſarily precluded by their profounder ſtudies, and that ſcrupulous attention to the minuteſt rules of grammar, which is induced by the turn of their education; and which, though by practice it may become in a great degree habitual and mechanical, will yet always appear deficient in the happy facility, wherewith ſo many females clothe their ſentiments. That they, who are naturally fond of ornament in every thing elſe, ſhould ſhow a certain honeſt neglect of it, where it is leaſt requiſite, where it is gene-

rally hurtful by embarraſſing and fettering that which ought to be free and unaffected, ſurely entitles them to ſome praiſe.

How often have we ſeen very ingenious men perplexed, when they have wiſhed to explain themſelves on ſome topic by no means abſtruſe, and which they perfectly underſtood! With how little grace have we heard them tell a ſtory! In theſe, and ſuch like points, women of any capacity excel. To what can the difference be owing? I fancy to this, that the former, in their words and ideas, attend too ſedulouſly to preciſion and embelliſhment; while the latter are content to ſpeak juſt what they mean, and to relate ſimply what they have read or heard, as it riſes to their minds, without the labour of accuracy, which often hampers the faculties in their operation, and diſturbs the train of nature.

On this principle, I preſume, is founded that maxim, which makes the perfec-

tion of art to lie in concealing it; an attainment extremely uncommon, and which, where it has taken place, has been always conſidered as the moſt difficult, and the moſt beautiful, of any that can diſtinguiſh the productions of taſte. From this it is, that the celebrated works of ancient genius have been judged to derive a large ſhare of the ſuperiority uſually aſcribed to them. From the ſame ſource chiefly, to compare ſmall things with great, has probably ariſen that peculiar happineſs in letter-writing, which the men, I think, are willing to allow to your ſex. Here, indeed, they comfort themſelves with their ſuperior ſtrength, and depth, and learned elegance in that, and other matters where intellect is concerned. Pretenſions to theſe, with a few exceptions, I believe, to ſay the truth, you had better reſign.

For my part, I could heartily wiſh to ſee the female world more accompliſhed than it is; but I do not wiſh to ſee it

abound with metaphyſicians, hiſtorians, ſpeculative philoſophers, or Learned Ladies of any kind. I ſhould be afraid, leſt the ſex ſhould loſe in ſoftneſs what they gained in force; and leſt the purſuit of ſuch elevation ſhould interfere a little with the plain duties and humble virtues of life. Amiable inſtances of the contrary I know there are. I think at this moment of one lady, in particular, who to an extenſive knowledge in philoſophy and languages ancient and modern, with ſome portion of poetical genius, and a conſiderable degree of literary fame, has the ſenſe and worth to join every domeſtic quality that can adorn a woman in her ſituation.

To inculcate ſuch qualities, together with thoſe elegant and intellectual improvements which young ladies would do well to acquire, with a view to ſobriety, uſefulneſs, ſelf-enjoyment, and the powers of pleaſing, will be the buſineſs of ſome ſubſequent addreſſes. What place religion

ought to have in female diſcourſe, muſt be likewiſe a ſubject of enquiry under another head. In the mean while, let me intreat you to recollect, that on cultivating a proper ſpirit of converſation will depend a great part of your proficiency and ours; of your preſent acceptance amongſt the wiſe and deſerving; of your future conſequence and merit in ſociety; of your entertainment, ſatisfaction, and, I may add, ſafety, through the ſucceſſive ſtages of life. Much of that life is ſpent in ſcenes of ſocial intercourſe. Important occaſions ariſe but ſeldom. A large proportion muſt be conſigned to trifles. Little things belong to little mortals. The virtue and happineſs of the ſexes are principally affected by the daily indiſcriminate tenor of their commerce. What felicity, and what glory, may not you, my friends, derive from thoſe talents by which that is regulated and ſweetened, refined and raiſed!

31MR64

SERMON VI.

ON

FEMALE VIRTUE,

WITH

DOMESTIC AND ELEGANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON VI.

On Female Virtue, with Domeſtic and Elegant Accompliſhments.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themſelves with Sobriety.

PROV. xxxi. 10, 31.

Who can find a Virtuous Woman? For her price is far above rubies.——Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her Works praiſe her in the gates.

TO divert fancy, to gratify deſire, and in general to be a ſort of better ſervants, are all the purpoſes for which ſome ſuppoſe your ſex deſigned. A moſt illiberal ſuppoſition! The leaſt degree of refinement or candour will diſpoſe us to

regard them in a far higher point of light. They were manifeſtly intended to be the mothers and formers of a rational and immortal offspring; to be a kind of ſofter companions, who, by nameleſs delightful ſympathies and endearments, might improve our pleaſures and ſoothe our pains; to lighten the load of domeſtic cares, and thereby leave us more at leiſure for rougher labours, or ſeverer ſtudies; and finally, to ſpread a certain grace and embelliſhment over human life. To wiſh to degrade them from ſo honourable a ſtation, indicates a mixture of ignorance, groſſneſs, and barbarity. But the men who think in this manner, do themſelves irreparable wrong, by putting it out of their power ever to enjoy the tendereſt ſentiments and moſt delicious feelings of the heart. He that has a true taſte of happineſs will chooſe, for his own ſake, to cheriſh the kindeſt opinion of the female deſtination.

Yet what ſhall we ſay? Are there not many women who ſeem to have entirely forgotten it themſelves; to have relinquiſhed at leaſt the moſt valuable part of their claim, and to have conſpired with thoſe male tyrants in ſinking their own importance? How often do we ſee them diſfigured by affectation and caprice! How often diſgraced and ruined by imprudence! What ſhameful inattention to the culture of their minds, in numberleſs inſtances! What perverſion, in not a few, of excellent underſtandings, through a levity that paſſes for innocent, becauſe not polluted by vice, nay for agreeable, becauſe accompanied with youth! Who that is a well-wiſher to the ſex, can forbear to be mortified on finding ſuch multitudes ſo ungainly in their manners, ſo unentertaining in their diſcourſe, ſo deſtitute of every ſolid and uſeful improvement, in a word, ſo totally devoid of all that can confer ſignificance, or beget eſteem; not to ſpeak of down-

right worthleſſneſs, proceeding from bad principles or wicked company?

With reſpect to theſe indeed, as well as the reſt, I am willing to believe, that they are frequently occaſioned by vacancy of thought, and want of occupation, which expoſe the mind to every ſnare; and that, in many caſes, all this evil might, through God's bleſſing, be happily prevented by an early and diligent application to Female Accompliſhments. Such therefore I will proceed to recommend, as a farther means of maintaining the Sobriety enjoined by our apoſtle. Not that I propoſe to confine myſelf to this ſingle view. Every other laudable and beneficial purpoſe, which thoſe accompliſhments are calculated to ſerve, will concur to enforce them. They may be divided into three claſſes, Domeſtic, Elegant, and Intellectual.

As to the firſt, I muſt remind you that, how much ſoever they may be now ne-

glected by many women as below their notice, no height of rank or affluence can juſtify ſuch neglect. The care of a houſhold all ages and nations have agreed to conſider as an indiſpenſible part of female employment, in every ſituation that admits it. The paſſage from which I have taken one of my texts deſerves, on this occaſion, your particular attention. As it exhibits perhaps the moſt beautiful picture that was ever drawn of the Virtuous Woman, in a ſphere of activity which you all hope to fill, and for which you ought to qualify yourſelves as much as poſſible in your preſent condition; I will read the whole, together with a ſhort paraphraſe which I have borrowed chiefly from the pious and learned biſhop Patrick, but without adhering to his diction.

Verſe 10. "Who can find a Virtuous "Woman? for her price is far above "rubies." Such a perſon, ſays the mo-

ther of Lemuel (a young prince for whoſe welfare ſhe was moſt tenderly ſolicitous) ſuch a perſon as I would recommend for a wife is hard to be found; one endowed with true worth and piety, who deems nothing beneath her that can any way become her ſtation; one, in ſhort, poſſeſſed of thoſe various and excellent qualities that fit her for adorning it, and render her infinitely more valuable than all the pearls or precious ſtones, with which ſo many women are fond of being decked.

11. "The heart of her huſband doth "ſafely truſt in her; ſo that he ſhall have "no need of ſpoil." In her perſonal honour and fidelity, and alſo in her œconomy and prudence with regard to all affairs at home, her huſband repoſes ſuch perfect confidence, that he can go abroad, and attend to public buſineſs, without the ſmalleſt anxiety about his domeſtic concerns, or the leaſt temptation to enrich himſelf at the expence of other men.

12. "She will do him good, and not "evil, all the days of her life." She will not only return his love with equal affection, but endeavour to enſure and heighten his eſteem by every engaging and reſpectable virtue. She will not only avoid whatever might provoke or diſpleaſe, but ſtudy to deſerve well of him by promoting his intereſt, and raiſing his reputation; and that not merely by ſtarts, or in tranſient fits of good humour, but uniformly and conſtantly every day of her life.

13. "She ſeeketh wool and flax, and "worketh willingly with her hands." To Her idleneſs is ſo hateful, that her huſband has no occaſion to excite her to induſtry. Of her own accord ſhe ſets up a linen and woollen manufacture, to which ſhe applies her hands ſo readily, as well as ſo dextrouſly, that it is apparent ſhe delights in the work.

14. "She is like the merchants ſhips: "ſhe bringeth her food from afar." Her

application and ingenuity enable her to maintain her family without expence, by exchanging the product for foreign commodities, when neceſſary, on terms no leſs advantageous than if her huſband fitted out a fleet of merchant ſhips to fetch them directly from diſtant countries.

15. "She riſeth alſo while it is yet "night; and giveth meat to her houſhold, "and a portion to her maidens." With ſuch ſpirit and vigour does ſhe proceed, that, inſtead of indulging herſelf in over much ſleep, ſhe riſes before break of day, to make proviſion for thoſe who are to go abroad to work in the fields, and to ſet her maidens their ſeveral taſks at home.

16. "She conſidereth a field, and "buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands "ſhe planteth a vineyard." So far is ſhe from waſting her huſband's eſtate, that by her frugality and capacity ſhe is continually improving it; firſt purchaſing a field

ſit for corn, when ſhe meets with one that on due inſpection ſhe finds worth the price, and then from the fruit of her own labours adding to it a vineyard, which ſhe takes care to have well planted.

17. "She girdeth her loins with "ſtrength, and ſtrengtheneth her arms." As ſhe is quick in her orders to thoſe about her, ſo ſhe beſtirs herſelf with the utmoſt activity, declining no pains or exertion proportioned to her ſtrength, which is increaſed by conſtant exerciſe, and which, with the chearfulneſs, expedition, and utility that attend it, ſhe prefers to all the decorations and delicacy of indolent beauty.

18. "She perceiveth that her mer-"chandiſe is good: her candle goeth not "out by night." Her labour indeed ſhe finds ſo wholeſome, and her traffick ſo profitable, that ſhe does not always conclude her work with the day; but often

continues it through as much of the night, as can be ſpared from neceſſary repoſe.

19. "She layeth her hands to the "ſpindle, and her hands hold the diſtaff." Such manual operations as are ſuited to her ſex, ſhe reckons not any diſparagement to her quality. Her fingers ſhow a dexterity that is alike pleaſing in the performance, and beneficial in the effects.

20. "She ſtretcheth out her hand to "the poor: yea, ſhe reacheth forth her "hands to the needy." Thoſe hands, which ſhe employs with ſo much diligence for the advantage of her family, ſhe fails not to ſtretch out with equal alacrity for the relief of the indigent. She is not ſo engroſſed by the cares of her own houſhold, as to forget the claims of thoſe who have no habitation. In Her frugality never degenerates into parſimony, but always miniſters to munificence. The poor, whe-

ther nearer or more remote, ſhare liberally in her bounty.

21. "She is not afraid of the ſnow for "her houſhold: for all her houſhold are "clothed with ſcarlet." Her bounty in the mean while is accompanied with ſuch diſcretion, that her own family and ſervants are in no danger of ſuffering by it. They are provided againſt the hardeſt winter; they have changes of raiment for the ſeveral ſeaſons; and when they are to wait upon her, or to appear on any particular occaſion that requires it, ſhe is careful to have them clothed with a degree of ſplendor.

22. "She maketh herſelf coverings of "tapeſtry: her clothing is ſilk and pur-"ple." The furniture of her houſe is noble. Her own apparel correſponds with it. She is not ignorant of what belongs to her rank; and ſhe ſupports it with a magnificence ſo much the more conſpi-

cuous for being principally her own handi-work.

23. "Her husband is known in the "gates, when he sitteth among the elders "of the land." Her attention to the appearance of her husband is not less than to her own. When he comes into the courts of judicature, and takes his place amongst the senators of the country, he is distinguished by the richness and elegance of the robes which she has prepared for him. The beholders pronounce him a happy man, in having such a wife as does him honour in public as well as private, and who, by easing him of all lesser cares, leaves him at full liberty to devote himself to the most important transactions.

24. "She maketh fine linen, and sell-"eth it, and delivereth girdles unto the "merchant." Her industry to provide for her family is such, that she follows more arts than one or two; making,

or example, beſide other articles already amed, fine linen, embroidered belts, nd girdles of different kinds curiouſly rought, which ſhe ſells at a conſiderable rice to the Phenician merchant.

25. "Strength and honour are her ' clothing; and ſhe ſhall rejoice in time ' to come." Although in every thing he makes, whether for ſale or for uſe, he diſplays a juſt taſte of what is both eautiful and ſplendid, ſtill it muſt be re-nembered, that her chief ornaments are a rm and conſtant mind, a modeſt and ecoming deportment, a manner of deal-ng with all, that is honourable, uniform, nd generous; which, joined to her other ualities before mentioned, free her from ll fear about future events, and prepare er to meet affliction, decay, and even eath itſelf, with ſerenity and hope.

26. "She openeth her mouth with ' wiſdom, and in her tongue is the law ' of kindneſs." Add to the reſt this par-

ticular praiſe, that as ſhe preſerves the due mean between taciturnity and loquaciouſneſs, ſo ſhe loves not to talk on fooliſh and frivolous ſubjects, but on ſuch as are ſerious and uſeful; on which, when ſhe can introduce them with propriety, ſhe is ſure to deliver herſelf pertinently and gracefully. Her language on all occaſions is ſoft and pleaſing, expreſſive of a gentle mind, and a tender heart. From the ſame fund, ſhe is led to embrace every opportunity of inculcating on all around her, kind affections and mutual concord.

27. "She looketh well to the ways "of her houſhold, and eateth not the "bread of idleneſs." In her own houſe moſt eſpecially ſhe is ſtudious of conveying edification. She obſerves the motions, and inſpects the manners of every one there, whom ſhe neither ſuffers to go abroad at their pleaſure, nor to labour at home without proper inſtruction: a con-

ern, which might alone be thought ſuf-
icient to employ her; inſomuch that if
he did nothing elſe ſhe would yet deſerve
he bread ſhe eats.

28. "Her children ariſe up, and call
'her bleſſed: her huſband alſo, and he
'praiſeth her." Happy the children of
uch a mother, whoſe maternal care for
heir proviſion, but much more for their
ducation, cannot fail of exciting their
ove and gratitude very early, and of diſ-
oſing them, when grown up, to honour
er perſon and venerate her virtues!
Happy beyond expreſſion the huſband of
uch a wife! He can never commend
er ſufficiently. While he attempts the
avourite ſubject, he is ſo ſtruck with her
urpaſſing worth, that he cannot reſtrain
imſelf from crying out,

29. "Many daughters have done vir-
'tuouſly; but thou excelleſt them all."
The number of thoſe women who have

acted worthily, who have mightily advanced their families, and nobly ſerved the generations in which they lived, is not ſmall. They are well entitled to applauſe, and I give it them with pleaſure; but there was never any comparable to Thee. Thy merits, thou beſt of women, and moſt beloved, thy merits far, far tranſcend them all!

30. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty "is vain: but a woman that feareth the "Lord, ſhe ſhall be praiſed." A good complexion and fine ſhape are, no doubt, engaging. A graceful mien and lovely features are yet more ſo. But as the greateſt beauty ſoon fades, and at laſt vaniſhes, ſo, alas! many ill qualities may lie concealed under all theſe fair appearances; ſuch, indeed, as utterly to diſappoint every hope of happineſs from that quarter. A truly pious woman, one who is governed throughout by a ſenſe of duty, and who to all her other excellent qualities

adds that reverence for God, which gives them at once elevation and ſtability—ſhe, and ſhe alone, is the completely amiable object, who will always impart delight, and always deſerve approbation.

31. "Give her of the fruit of her "hands, and let her own works praiſe "her in the gates." Let all conſpire to extol her character; for I cannot do it enough. Let her never want her juſt tribute of commendation. While ſome are magnified for their high birth, ſome prized for their great fortune, others admired for their ſingular beauty, and others cried up for attainments of no intrinſic, or of no conſiderable value; let her perſonal conduct, and her ſuperior qualities, be celebrated with peculiar honours in the largeſt aſſemblies; where, indeed, if all men ſhould be ſilent, that conduct and thoſe qualities would reſound her praiſe.

What a deſcription is here! Can you attend to it without emotion? Or have

modern manners ſo warped your minds, that the ſimplicity of ancient virtue, inſtead of appearing to you an object of veneration, looks romantic and ridiculous? Tell me then in good earneſt, were the women of thoſe days the leſs eſtimable, or the leſs attractive, that they did not waſte their lives in a round of diſſipation and impertinence, but employed them in works of ingenuity and uſefulneſs, of piety and mercy; that even women of the firſt rank amongſt them, as we are informed by the oldeſt and beſt authors, held it no diminution to apply their hands to different kinds of manufacture; that they took great delight in ſuch occupations; and finally, that good houſewifery, in all its extent, was reckoned an eſſential qualification of every matron?

I am ſufficiently ſenſible of the influence that the cuſtoms of different ages and nations have on the modes of thinking that ſucceſſively obtain; nor do I expect, that in this land called Chriſtian, which ought

to be unequalled on account of its attainments, as much as it is on that of its advantages, our mothers or our daughters, in general, will be perſuaded by any thing preachers can ſay, to emulate the humble grandeur of many a noble lady, of many a fair princeſs, in former generations. Yet I am not without hope, that ſome of them may be induced to copy, though at a diſtance, thoſe modeſt but exalted originals.

I mentioned our daughters, as well as mothers; becauſe I would not have them think that they have nothing to learn from the picture we have juſt ſurveyed. Would the Virtuous Woman, ſo ſweetly pourtrayed by Lemuel's mother, and ſo particularly marked by the characters of married and maternal excellence, have been what ſhe was, if in her ſingle ſtate ſhe had not ſtudied the neceſſary principles?

After looking at ſo ſublime a ſtandard, I am well aware, that any thing I can

now offer on this part of my ſubject will appear to ſink. I am ſorry for it. But ſince it muſt be ſo, let the mortifying ſentiment be felt by all, as a juſt ſatire on the declenſion of this age. To ſay the truth, the zeal of the preacher is too much depreſſed by that conſideration, to bear him out in urging our young women to a cloſe imitation of what however he muſt always admire. In ſhort, when we ſpeak of good houſewifery now a days, we muſt ſubmit to ſpeak in a lower key. Would to heaven, that of this ſcience many mothers would teach their daughters but the common rudiments; that they were unfaſhionable enough to educate them to be fit for any thing beyond mere ſhow!

What do not great families ſuffer daily from the incapacity, or inattention, of thoſe miſtreſſes that leave all to houſekeepers and other ſervants! How many large eſtates might be ſaved from ruin by a wiſer conduct! I muſt ſay it once more,

that no woman in the world ought to think it beneath her to be an œconomiſt. An œconomiſt is a character truly reſpectable, in whatever ſtation. To ſee that time which ſhould be laid out in examining the accounts, regulating the operations, and watching over the intereſts of perhaps a numerous family—to ſee it loſt, worſe than loſt, in viſiting and gaming, "in "chambering and wantonneſs," is ſhocking. It is ſo, let the incomes be as certain, as conſiderable, or as immenſe as you will; though by the way they are hardly ever ſo immenſe in reality, as they often appear. But where, on the contrary, they are both moderate and precarious, a conduct of this kind we have no words to ſtigmatize as it deſerves.

Merchants and tradeſmen that marry ſuch women are ſurely objects of ſingular compaſſion, if indeed they were deceived into an opinion, that the women they have choſen for their partners were taught

this neceſſary piece of knowledge. But very ſeldom, as matters are managed at preſent, have they ſuch deception to plead for their choice. Is it poſſible they can be ignorant in what manner young ladies are bred at moſt of our Boarding-ſchools? And do they not ſee in what manner they generally behave on coming home? Some of them, I acknowledged before, when placed in houſes of their own, appear to much more advantage than could be reaſonably expected. But I repeat the queſtion I then aſked, Is ſo great a chance, in an affair of ſuch conſequence, to be relied upon?

It muſt be owned alſo, that in this age the order or figure of a table is pretty well underſtood, as far as relates to ſplendor and parade. But would it not be worth your while to improve upon the art, by learning to connect frugality with elegance; to produce a genteel, or however a good appearance, from things of leſs

expence? I know it is difficult, eſpecially in great cities; but I am ſure it is laudable, and deſerves to be attempted. This you may depend upon, that moſt men are highly pleaſed to obſerve ſuch œconomical talents in a young woman; and thoſe talents in one that is married will ſcarce ever fail to animate the application, excite the generoſity, and heighten the confidence of a huſband. The contrary diſcourages and diſguſts beyond expreſſion; I mean, where the huſband has any ſobriety, or any prudence. The follies inſeparable from profuſion, and the miſeries daily produced by it, I do not pretend to enumerate. A moment's conſideration will convince you, that it is always unwiſe, and muſt be generally deſtructive.

Next to direct profuſion is that indiſpoſition to family affairs, which too commonly follows on habits of diſſipation contracted early. A young woman who has turned

her thoughts to thoſe matters in her father's houſe, or in any other where Providence may have diſpoſed her lot, and who has been accuſtomed to acquit herſelf well in any leſſer department entruſted to her care, will afterwards, when her province is enlarged, ſlide into the duties of it with readineſs and pleaſure. The particulars have already paſſed through her mind. The different ſcenes, as they riſe, will not diſconcert her. Being acquainted with the leading rules, and having had ſome opportunities of applying them, or of ſeeing them applied, her own good ſenſe will dictate the reſt, and render eaſy and agreeable to her that which, to a modiſh lady, is all ſtrange, perplexing, and irkſome. How ſtrong the contraſt! Who does not perceive, where the preference is due?

Hear what a maſterly writer, who ſeems to have been well acquainted with the world, and particularly with the commer-

cial part of it, has advanced on this head in his advice to a ſon, where he is directing him as to the choice of a wife. "This bear always in mind, that if ſhe "is not frugal, if ſhe is not what is "called a Good Manager, if ſhe does "not pique herſelf on her knowledge of "family affairs, and laying out her money "to the beſt advantage; let her be ever "ſo ſweetly tempered, gracefully made, "or elegantly accompliſhed, ſhe is no "wife for a tradeſman: and," he even adds, "all thoſe otherwiſe amiable ta-"lents will but open juſt ſo many ways "to ruin." After relating a little ſtory, full of inſtruction, he thus goes on: "In "ſhort, remember your mother, who was "ſo exquiſitely verſed in this art, that "her dreſs, her table, and every other "particular, appeared rather ſplendid than "otherwiſe; and yet good houſewifery "was the foundation of all; and her "bills, to my certain knowledge, were "a fourth leſs than moſt of her neigh-

"bours, who had hardly cleanlineſs to "boaſt, in return for their aukward pro- "digality."

But perhaps you will tell me, that you may never have occaſion to exert ſuch qualities in any ſphere of conſequence. The anſwer is obvious. As the future is uncertain, you ought to acquire them in caſe of need; beſides, in fact, there is no ſituation, where the general principles of frugality are not neceſſary, on the ſcore both of diſcretion and charity. In the mean while, the acquiſition will be honourable, and the ſtudy uſeful. It not only becomes your ſex, but will employ your minds innocently, and virtuouſly, at hours which you might be tempted to ſpend in a very different manner. The ſubject is not intricate; yet it admits of a conſiderable detail, and will take up ſome time. The learning to write a fair hand, and to caſt accounts with facility; the looking into the diſpoſitions and practices

of ſervants; the informing yourſelves about the prices of every thing needful for a family, together with the beſt methods, and propereſt ſeaſons, for providing it; the obſerving whatever relates to cleanlineſs and neatneſs in the furniture and apartments of a houſe; the underſtanding how to deal with domeſtics, tradeſmen, and others; above all, the obtaining every poſſible light with relation to the nurſing, management, and education of children—theſe and ſuch like articles will, if I miſtake not, furniſh ample ſcope for the exerciſe of your faculties, in the purſuit of what I have termed Domeſtic Accompliſhments. Nor would I have you deſpiſe any one of them as trivial or dull. If they ſhould ſeem either, you muſt give me leave to ſay the fault is in you. If on any pretence whatever you ſhould affect to call them ſo, I ſhould deem it a mark of——But I forbear; and, for your encouragement to ſuch application, would take notice, that from what

is thus neceſſary and beneficial, you may, time after time, paſs, with a tranſition often imperceptible, to what is alſo pretty and entertaining. Which leads me to ſpeak,

In the ſecond place, of the Elegant Accompliſhments I propoſed to recommend. Of theſe all will be found conſiſtent with Chriſtian Sobriety, and ſeveral conducive to it. Where morals are not in ſome meaſure concerned, the peculiar modes of an age can occaſion no material difference. Some particulars, I am now to touch upon, might not ſuit that unſettled and perſecuted ſtate which the firſt profeſſors of chriſtianity were in, nor that diſtinguiſhed ſeverity of manners which would naturally ariſe out of ſuch a condition, as well as out of their late ſeparation from paganiſm; and yet thoſe things may be no way improper in a chriſtian woman of theſe times, when religion is eſtabliſhed, when property is ſecured, and

when the prevalence of a ſyſtem ſupremely benevolent has nothing to fear from a jealous policy, or a bigoted prieſthood.

To begin with that exerciſe which women appear almoſt univerſally fond of, but which ſcrupulous minds have uſually thought exceptionable. For my own part, I muſt acknowledge, I can ſee no reaſon for declamation againſt the moderate and diſcreet uſe of Dancing. "To every "thing," ſays Solomon, "there is a ſea-"ſon, and a time to every purpoſe under "the heaven:"—among the reſt—"a "time to dance." Even thoſe purſuits which all approve, and approve moſt highly, may be abuſed. Nothing is exempt from ſnares: but one of the worſt is a diſpoſition to be peeviſh, illiberal, and unſociable. In the Jewiſh inſtitution, it is well known, the exerciſe in queſtion was adopted into religious worſhip itſelf. It is yet more remarkable, that in the parable of the prodigal ſon our Saviour

mentions dancing, as making a part of the friendly and honeſt feſtivity indulged on his return. The ſingle inſtance recorded in the New Teſtament, wherein it was perverted to a pernicious purpoſe, has been weakly urged againſt a practice that, uſed with temperance and prudence, is certainly adapted to promote health and good humour, a ſocial ſpirit, and kind affections between the ſexes, with that eaſy graceful carriage, to which Nature has annexed very pleaſing perceptions in the beholders.

With reſpect to this laſt, it ſeems to me, that there can be no impropriety in it, any more than in modulating the voice into the moſt agreeable tones in ſinging; to which none, I think, will object. What is dancing, in the beſt ſenſe, but the harmony of motion rendered more palpable? Aukwardneſs, ruſticity, ungraceful geſtures, can never ſurely be meritorious. It is the obſervation of a cele-

brated philoſopher, who was deeply ſkilled on moſt ſubjects, that "the principal part "of beauty is in decent and gracious "motion." And here one cannot help regretting that this, which may be conſidered in ſome meaſure as the virtue of the body, is not oftener ſeen in our country, as if the ſole deſign of dancing were to ſupply the amuſement of the hour. A modeſt but animated mien, an air at once unaffected and noble, are doubtleſs circumſtances of great attraction and delight.

I ſaid a Modeſt mien; for that muſt never be given up: And on this account, I own, I cannot much approve of a young lady's dancing often in public aſſemblies, which, without a ſingular guard, muſt gradually wear off that lovely baſhfulneſs ſo largely inculcated in a former diſcourſe. Private circles conſiſting chiefly of friends and relations, and where perſons of more years than the younger performers are preſent, I ſhould eſteem in every reſpect the

moſt eligible. Where ſuch precautions are obſerved, and this diverſion is not ſuffered to interfere with health, regularity, modeſt apparel, and prudent expence; I freely confeſs, that I am one of thoſe who can look on with a very ſenſible ſatisfaction, well pleaſed to ſee a company of young people joyful with innocence, and happy in each other. If an exerciſe ſo ſociable, and ſo enlivening, were to occupy ſome part of that time which is laviſhed on cards, would the youth of either ſex be loſers by it? I think not.

Having mentioned Cards, I will uſe the freedom, unpleaſing as it may prove, or ill bred as it may ſeem, to offer a few plain remarks on the paſſion for them, which is now become ſo ſtrangely predominant, as to take the lead of every thing elſe in almoſt every company of every rank. With many indeed it ſeems to be a calling, and, as a witty author has obſerved, "a laborious one too, ſuch as

"they toil night and day at, nay do not "allow themſelves that remiſſion which "the laws both of God and man have "provided for the meaneſt mechanic. "The ſabbath is to them no day of reſt; "but this trade goes on when all ſhops "are ſhut. I know not," continues he, "how they ſatisfy themſelves in ſuch an "habitual waſte of their time; but I "much doubt that plea, whatſoever it is, "which paſſeth with them, will ſcarce "hold weight at his tribunal who hath "commanded us to redeem, not fling "away our time."

To the ſame occupation what numbers ſacrifice their health and ſpirits, with every natural pleaſure that depends on theſe, not excepting even the comforts of freſh air; purſuing it in the country with the ſame unabating ardour as in town, and to all the beauty and ſweetneſs of rural ſcenes, in the fineſt ſeaſon, preferring the ſuffocating atmoſphere of perhaps a

ſmall apartment, where they regularly, every day if poſſible, crowd round the card-table for hours together! What neglect of buſineſs and ſtudy, what ruin of credit, of fortune, of families, of connexions, of all that is valuable in this world, often follows the frenzy I ſpeak of, who can expreſs?

I will ſuppoſe, my fair hearers, nay I do hope, that the demon of Avarice has not yet taken poſſeſſion of your hearts. But do ye know any thing ſo likely to introduce him, as the ſpirit of Gaming? Is not this laſt a kindred fiend; and does not he, like moſt other tempters, advance by ſlow ſteps, and with a ſmiling aſpect? Tell me in ſober ſadneſs, what ſecurity can you have that the love of play will not lead you to the love of gaming?

Between theſe I know there is a diſtinction. But is it not a diſtinction, at beſt, reſembling that between twilight and

darkneſs; and does not one ſucceed the other almoſt as naturally? The former at firſt is chearful and ſerene, retaining ſome rays of pleaſantry and good humour; but by little and little theſe diſappear. A deepening ſhade takes place; till at laſt, every emanation of mirth and good nature dying away, all is involved in the gloom of anxiety, ſuſpicion, envy, diſguſt, and every dreadful paſſion that lours in the train of Covetouſneſs. I ſay not, that this always happens; but I aſk again, what ſecurity is there that it will not happen to you? Did not every gameſter in the world, whether male or female, begin juſt where you do? And is it not probable, that many of that infamous tribe had once as little apprehenſion as you can have, of proceeding thoſe lengths to which they have ſince run, through the natural progreſs of vice, no where more infatuating or more rapid than in this execrable one?

But let us ſuppoſe the deſire of winning ſhould in you never riſe to that rage, which agitates the breaſt of many a fine lady, diſcompoſes thoſe features, and inflames thoſe eyes, where nothing ſhould be ſeen but ſoft illumination. Are there not lower degrees in the thirſt of gain, which a liberal mind would ever carefully avoid? And pray conſider; when either by ſuperior ſkill, or what is called better luck, you happen to ſtrip of her money, of that money which it is very poſſible ſhe can ill ſpare, an acquaintance, a companion, a friend, one whom you profeſs at leaſt to love and honour, perhaps at the very moment to entertain with all the ſacred rites of hoſpitality—is there nothing unkind, nothing ſordid, in giving way to that which draws after it ſuch conſequences? Is this the ſpirit of friendſhip or humanity?—Bleſſed God! how does the paſſion I condemn deprave the worthieſt affections of nature; and how does that bewitching power, the

Faſhion of the times, pervert even the beſt underſtandings, when reſigned to its impoſtures!

Nor is it the laws of humanity and friendſhip only, that are tranſgreſſed by the luſt of gaming. The ſweet emotions of love and tenderneſs between the ſexes are often ſwallowed up by this all-devouring appetite; an appetite, which perhaps beyond any thing elſe tends to harden and contract the heart; at the ſame time that the immoderate indulgence of it excludes a thouſand little reciprocations of ſentiment and joy, which would ſerve to kindle and feed the flame of virtuous affection.——How much converſation ſuffers from it, who does not perceive?

Here indeed you will tell me with an air of triumph, that it prevents a great deal of ſcandal. What, then, are your minds ſo unfurniſhed, ſo vacant, that without cards you muſt neceſſarily fly to that

that wretched reſource? Creation, providence, religion, books, obſervation, fancy; do theſe preſent ſo narrow a field of entertainment, as to force you on the alternative of preying either on the reputation or on the property of others?——But, now I recollect, while you poſſeſs an art of ſuch utility as this laſt, for filling up the blanks of diſcourſe, as well as for repairing the waſtes of extravagance, why ſhould you give yourſelves any trouble to read or think, to enlarge your ideas or improve your faculties, beyond the uſual ſtandard? Surely the knowledge of the moſt faſhionable games, of the moſt remarkable characters, of the reigning modes and amuſements of the ſeaſon, with a few common-place compliments, remarks, and matters of fact, but eſpecially ſome paſſages of private hiſtory, told by way of ſecret to all the world, is quite ſufficient, by the help of a little vivacity which Nature will ſupply, to accompliſh you for every purpoſe of modern ſociety.——Alas,

how poor is all this! How unworthy the principal attention of beings made "but a "little lower than the angels," and profeſſing to believe in the communion of ſaints!

But are there not many general companies, in which it were impoſſible to ſpend a long evening with any tolerable eaſe, or propriety, but by borrowing aſſiſtance from the card-table? I grant it, as things are now; and, when you are ſo ſituated, your complying with the occaſion may be both allowable and proper, provided the ſtakes are but trifling, your tempers not ruffled, and what you win or loſe is agreed to be given away in charity. By this means perhaps you may "make to your-"ſelves friends of the mammon of un-"righteouſneſs."

But tell me, I beſeech you, where is the neceſſity of being very often in general companies? Are theſe the ſcenes of true enjoyment? What, where the heart

cannot be unfolded; where the underſtanding has little or no play; where all is reſerve, ceremony, ſhow; where the ſmile of complaiſance is frequently put on to deceive, and even the warmeſt profeſſions of regard are ſometimes made the "cloak of maliciouſneſs!"

There is not, methinks, any thing more contemptible, or more to be pitied, than that turn of mind, which finding no entertainment in itſelf, none at home, none in books, none in rational converſation, nor in the intercourſes of real friendſhip, nor in ingenious works of any kind, is continually ſeeking to ſtifle reflexion in a tumult of pleaſures, and to divert wearineſs in a crowd.

'But can it be ſuppoſed, that even in 'more private meetings people ſhould be al-'ways able to paſs the time without cards?" You ought to ſpeak more plainly, and ſay, to Kill the time; for that is com-

monly the caſe. By the moſt favourable reckoning, the greateſt part of thoſe hours that are devoted to play is loſt. That which was begun for amuſement is lengthened out to fatigue. No one improving or generous idea is circulated; no one happy or ſolacing recollection is ſecured. The whole is to be ſet down as a large portion of the ſpan of life cut off without advantage, and without ſatisfaction, as far as virtue or reaſon is concerned.

'What then ſhall we do when toge-
'ther?' Do! Why, converſe, or hold your tongues, as good ſenſe and unaffected nature prompt to either. Do! Why, work, read, ſing, dance, laugh, and look grave by turns, as occaſion ſerves; any thing in the world that is innocent, rather than eternal play. For perſons in all the gaiety of health, and ſprightlineſs of youth; perſons not relaxed by infirmity, or exhauſted by buſineſs; perſons with numberleſs ſources of delight laid open to

them, and every natural reliſh lively and ſtrong—for them to be at a loſs how to ſpend a ſingle evening without cards, what a degradation of the human mind!

Willing to corroborate an argument which to me appears of ſuch importance, I will avail myſelf of the words of a writer now living, who is not leſs reſpectable for the force than for the morality of his pen. Complaining of the fatal paſſion for play, he mentions, amongſt other miſchiefs to which it leads, its tendency "to deſtroy all diſtinctions both of rank "and ſex; to cruſh all emulation, but "that of fraud; to confound the world "in a chaos of folly; to with-hold youth "from its natural pleaſures, deprive wit "of its influence, and beauty of its "charms; to extinguiſh the flames of "the lover, as well as of the patriot; "to ſink life into a tedious uniformity, "and to allow it no other hopes or fears "but thoſe of robbing and being robbed."

He adds, in the ſame animated ſtyle, "That if thoſe of your ſex who have "minds capable of nobler ſentiments, will "unite in vindication of their pleaſures "and their prerogatives, they may fix a "time at which cards ſhall ceaſe to be in "faſhion, or be left only to thoſe who "have neither beauty to be loved, nor "ſpirit to be feared; neither knowledge "to teach, nor modeſty to learn; and "who, having paſſed their youth in vice, "are juſtly condemned to ſpend their age "in folly."

But I proceed to a more agreeable taſk, that of recommending, in the next place, thoſe ingenious works mentioned a little while ago.

As to Needle-work in particular, we find it ſpoken of in ſcripture with commendation. Its beauty and advantages are univerſally apparent. It was practiſed by ladies formerly, and ladies of the firſt

rank, much more than it is at preſent. They indeed had much more leiſure than moſt of their poſterity. They were ſimple enough, I ſuppoſe, to be in love with home, and to ſeek their happineſs in their duty. Of that duty they conſidered diligence as a part; nor does it appear to have in the leaſt cramped their imaginations. Of their ſkill in this way we have ſeen very laudable monuments. They only wanted inſtruction in the principles of the Fine Arts, to give their performances a juſter taſte. At any rate, their time would by ſuch means paſs away more pleaſantly. They would be under little temptation of wandering abroad; conſequently they would eſcape infinite ſnares and inconveniencies. Then, too, private converſation would be cultivated on a much more rational footing; and many a pleaſing diſcuſſion would ariſe on the ſubject of their various productions. Their fancies, called forth by a thouſand prettineſſes, and kept up by the ſpirit of

elegant emulation, would of courſe be poliſhed and exalted. This, I believe, will be found true, that thoſe females of the preſent age, who have reſolution enough to copy ſo antiquated an example, ſeldom fail to prove the moſt entertaining companions.

I once knew a lady, noble by her birth, but more noble by her virtues, who never ſat idle in company, unleſs when compelled to it by the punctilio of ceremony, which ſhe took care ſhould happen as rarely as poſſible. Being a perfect miſtreſs of her needle, and having an excellent taſte in that, as in many other things, her manner, whether at home, or abroad with her friends (for friends ſhe had, though a woman of faſhion, and bred at court) was to be conſtantly engaged in working ſomething uſeful, or ſomething beautiful; at the ſame time that ſhe aſſiſted in ſupporting the converſation, with an attention and capacity which I have

never ſeen exceeded. For the ſake of variety and improvement, when in her own houſe, ſome one of the company would often read aloud, while ſhe and her female viſitants were thus employed. I muſt add, that during an intimate acquaintance of ſeveral years, I do not remember to have ſeen her once driven to the polite neceſſity of either winning or loſing money at play, and making her gueſts defray the expence of the entertainment.

Permit me, before I diſmiſs this article, to offer a hint or two, that may not be unworthy your obſervation. Inſtead of that minute and laborious kind of work, which is often practiſed by young ladies, I ſhould think that ſlighter and freer patterns would for the moſt part be greatly preferable. The ſight would be in no danger of being ſtrained; much leſs time would be required to finiſh them; and, when finiſhed, they would produce a much better ef-

ſect. They would give, beyond compariſon, more ſcope to the imagination; they would exhibit an eaſe, a gracefulneſs, and a flow that ought to enter, as much as poſſible, into all works of taſte; and as they would admit a far greater multiplicity of ornament, ſo likewiſe the purpoſe of utility would be promoted in a far higher degree.

The buſineſs of ſhading with the needle is now, comparatively, ſeldom thought of but at ſchool, where it is frequently taught in a paltry, and always in a defective manner, though certainly deſerving of particular attention. The diſpoſition, harmony, and melting of colours in this way, afford one of the fineſt exerciſes to female genius, and one of the moſt amuſing that can be imagined; beſide that ſuch productions are the moſt permanent.

But the truth is, nothing complete or diſtinguiſhed in thoſe attempts can be ex-

pected, while the proper foundation is ſo generally omitted to be laid; I mean Drawing, which is

The third accompliſhment I would take the liberty to inculcate. That many more young ladies would be found qualified for ſuch a ſtudy than is uſually apprehended, I cannot doubt. Several, I am certain, have applied to it with the greateſt ſucceſs and pleaſure, who, before they began, did not promiſe themſelves the leaſt. It is truly ſurpriſing, that ſo few of our more intelligent females ſhould ſhow a deſire of being inſtructed in ſo pleaſing an art, at a time too when it is to be learnt with ſuch advantage and encouragement.

None can be ignorant, that the principles and practice of drawing were never underſtood amongſt us to the height they are at preſent; owing chiefly to the patronage of a ſociety, that reflects the greateſt credit on this country, and on

this age. But here juſtice to your ſex demands an acknowledgement which we joyfully make, that ſeveral honorary rewards have been moſt deſervedly gained by young ladies of rank and character, for ſpecimens of ingenuity, which it is to be hoped their grand-children will one day mention and emulate with honeſt pride.

If ſuch of you, my amiable hearers, as are in a ſituation to try whether Nature has given you talents for this beautiful accompliſhment, would fairly make the eſſay, you might very probably open to yourſelves, and to your friends, a ſpring of entertainment that would never run dry; that would contribute to improve, while it delighted you, by adding to your ideas of elegance and grace; that would prevent many a folly, and many a ſin, which proceed from idleneſs; and, be not hurt if I add, that would prove the means of future ſupport, ſhould it pleaſe the Supreme Wiſdom to reduce you to a ſtate of dependance.

There are other pretty works, extremely proper for female hands, which I need not ſpecify here, ſince ſeveral of the remarks already made will, I preſume, be applicable to them. Let it ſuffice to ſay in general, that whatever is genteel, and whatever is uſeful, in ſuch occupations, ſhould always claim your regard, when you have leiſure and capacity. The former you will ſeldom want, if you have learnt to portion out your time with judgment; and in the latter you ought never to pronounce yourſelves defective, before you have honeſtly tried.

The laſt accompliſhment of the elegant kind, which I ſhall mention, is Muſic. This, I conceive, is to be recommended with more diſcrimination than the reſt, how much ſoever ſuch a notion may contradict the prevailing opinion. It is very true, there are young ladies who, without any particular advantage of a natural ear or good voice, have, by means of cir-

cumſtances peculiarly favourable, made great proficiency in muſic: but it is as true, that they have made it at a vaſt expence of time and application; ſuch as no woman ought to beſtow upon an object, to which ſhe is not carried by the irreſiſtible impulſe of genius.

In many other arts it is poſſible for original talents to lie dormant, till called up by aſſiduity or accident; but where there is a ſtrong propenſion to this, it will, I imagine, hardly forbear to burſt out, by means of the tranſcendent pleaſure derived from it on all occaſions. If it do not, if even the beſt muſic can be heard without a degree of delight bordering on tranſport; either the practice will never reward the pains neceſſary for acquiring it; or, there being no native vein of excellence in that way, it will, as has been commonly obſerved, be diſcontinued on a change of condition; in which caſe you loſe the labour of years, that might have

been directed with laſting benefit into ſome other channel.

Be this as it may, you will readily allow, that for a young perſon who has no turn for the ſtudy I am ſpeaking of, to be condemned both to mortify herſelf, and to puniſh her acquaintance, by murdering every leſſon put into her hands, is a very aukward ſituation, however much her maſter may, for the ſake of his craft, flatter her and her friends; aſſuring them, perhaps with an air of great ſolemnity, that he never had a better ſcholar in his whole life. If ſhe whoſe attainments in this kind are but indifferent, could be contented to amuſe herſelf, and thoſe of her own family, now and then, with an air that happened to pleaſe them, it were well: but how does a judicious hearer bluſh for the poor beginner, when ſet down by the command of a fond parent to entertain perhaps a large company, as we have

often ſeen, with performing that of which ſhe ſcarce knows the very rudiments; while all is diſappointment on their part, and, if ſhe have any underſtanding, confuſion on hers!

Is the preacher then an enemy to muſic? Much the reverſe. Where there is a real genius for it, improved by art, and regulated by ſentiment, nothing ſurely can be more charming, or more affecting. Its importance in the ancient Jewiſh worſhip is well known. Of its beauty and uſefulneſs in our churches, when conducted in a manner ſuitable to its ſacred purpoſe, and not proſtituted to levity, or perverted by oſtentation, I am not inſenſible. Its influence in all ages and nations ſtands univerſally confeſſed. It is founded in ſome of the ſtrongeſt perceptions of Nature, wherever ſhe has ſeen fit to confer a lively ſenſibility to the melody of ſounds.

But how much is it to be regretted, that this wonderful charm of melody properly ſo called, together with the whole merit of expreſſion, ſhould be ſacrificed, as we frequently find, to the proud but poor affectation of mere trick and execution; that, inſtead of rendering the various combinations of ſounds a powerful inſtrument of touching the heart, exciting agreeable emotions, or allaying uneaſy ſenſations, as in the days of old, it ſhould be generally degraded into an idle amuſement, devoid of dignity, devoid of meaning, abſolutely devoid of any one ingredient that can inſpire delightful ideas, or engage unaffected applauſe! What lover of this enchanting art but muſt lament, that the moſt inſipid ſong which can diſgrace it is no ſooner heard in places of public entertainment, than every young lady who has learnt the common notes, is immediately taught to repeat it in a manner ſtill more inſipid; while the moſt

ſublime and intereſting compoſitions, where ſimplicity and greatneſs unite, are ſeldom or never thought of in her caſe; as if the female mind were incapable of reliſhing any thing grave, pathetic, or exalted!

Let me here call on every muſical ſpirit of your ſex, to aſſert the rights of good ſenſe; and to inſiſt that thoſe, who are entruſted with this branch of their education, ſhall not fail to introduce them, as early as poſſible, into an acquaintance with whatever is moſt beautiful and noble in the article of melody. The more thorough knowledge of harmony may come afterwards, if you be ambitious of advancing ſo far. In the mean time you will have the ſatisfaction of pleaſing the beſt judges, and of entertaining yourſelves with ſuch pieces as, while the words to which they are ſet convey no ſentiments but what are ele-

vated or virtuous, ſhall ſerve to refine and enliven your thoughts, to raiſe your ſpirits into joy, or compoſe them into ſweetneſs, and on choſen occaſions, by the diviner ſtrains of ſolemn muſic, to lift your hearts to heaven, prove a kind of prelude to the airs of paradiſe, and prepare you for joining the choir of angels.

31MR64

SERMON VII.

ON

FEMALE VIRTUE,

WITH

INTELLECTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON VII.

On Female Virtue, with Intellectual Accompliſhments.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themſelves with Sobriety.

PROV. iv. 5, 6, 8, 9.

Get Wiſdom, get Underſtanding.—Forſake her not, and ſhe ſhall preſerve thee: love her, and ſhe ſhall keep thee.—Exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee.—She ſhall give to thy head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory ſhall ſhe deliver to thee.

IN a country like this, where there is certainly a native fund of good ſenſe, where ſciences and arts are widely cultivated, where works of genius and taſte in every kind are allowed to abound; is it not ſomewhat ſtrange, that the com-

mon ſtyle of converſation ſhould be ſo little inſtructive or entertaining? How ſeldom do we fall into a company, in which we learn any thing uſeful, or hear any thing whatever above the rate of the multitude; ſuch as low jeſts, vulgar conceits, incoherent diſputation, or impertinent tattle! How very ſeldom does a thinking man come away from the viſit of an evening, delighted with his manner of ſpending it! One who has converſed only with a ſmall circle of ingenious friends, will hardly conceive what a frivolous, what a piteous thing, the ordinary ſtrain of company appears to an intelligent by-ſtander.

The favourite communications of men of pleaſure are beyond deſcription corrupt and groveling, with ſcarce any diverſity. Thoſe of gay aſſemblies are the quinteſſence of dulneſs and diſſimulation; except only that the firſt is ſometimes tinctured with a few ſprinklings of ſmart-

neſs, and the laſt always concealed under the ſpecious colours of civility. As to the buſy, the learned, and the grave; the greater part are no ſooner releaſed from their reſpective purſuits, than they throw themſelves looſe into a liſtleſſneſs of diſpoſition, that wanders with impatience in queſt of public diverſion, or diffuſes itſelf in private through the vacuity of idle talk: as if there were no medium between ſerioufneſs and folly, or as if people could not find relief from the ſtretch of application, in the agreeable unbendings of moderate amuſement and rational diſcourſe. In ſhort, if we want to find a converſation enlivened with variety and ſpirit, enlightened by intelligence, and tempered by politeneſs, we muſt ſeek for it amongſt a few men who join ſentiment to knowledge, and a few women who join knowledge to vivacity.

That the number of theſe ſhould be ſo ſmall, compared with the untaught and

the ungoverned Many, is ſurely matter of lamentation. To what ſhall we chiefly impute it? To what elſe, but to that whirl of diſſipation, which, like ſome mighty vortex, has ſwallowed up in a manner all conditions and characters? That the young indeed ſhould be often carried down the ſtream, till they ſink into inſignificance, is not much to be wondered at, how much ſoever it is to be regretted. But, alas! they do not always ſtop there. From what is trivial, how eaſy the tranſition to what is mean! How quick the deſcent from thoughtleſſneſs to vice! Nothing, perhaps, requires better ſenſe, or a ſtricter guard, than to trifle without being fooliſh, or to be frolickſome without ſin. They that would hold faſt their righteouſneſs, and not depart from the decorum of their character, cannot be too careful to regulate their converſation, as well as their conduct, by the great law of reflexion, and in the hour of gaiety itſelf, not to

loſe ſight of wiſdom. But how ſhould this be expected, where the mind is wholly unimproved, where no internal reſources are ſecured in the days of youth, but all is left to nature neglected by education, and warped by faſhion, or to the ſcanty ſupplies which company, news, and accidents afford?

What I would therefore now labour is, with the help of God, to perſuade you, my fair auditory, to enrich and adorn your underſtandings with ſuch attainments, as ſhall render you not only leſs dependant on external amuſements and empty gratifications, but more ſuperior to every thing corrupting and dangerous; ſuch as ſhall entertain and edify you at the ſame time, enable you to enjoy ſolitude, and qualify you to ſhine in converſation even without deſigning it, to inſpire a mixture of complacence and reſpect, in fine, to unite decency and ſenſe with mirth and joy. Thus would I ſtill en-

deavour to promote that ſpirit of Chriſtian Sobriety which our apoſtle inculcates, and by the ſame means contribute to the felicity and dignity of your ſex.

The paſſage from the Proverbs, which I have read to you, by way of a ſecond text, requires no commentary; and in truth I know not any that could do it juſtice. As it is, it muſt ſtrike you at once with its ſimplicity, tenderneſs, and ſublimity. The Wiſdom or Underſtanding, ſo beautifully perſonified by Solomon, is doubtleſs to be conſidered chiefly as repreſenting Religion, which is certainly the higheſt exerciſe of our rational powers. But I ſee no reaſon for conceiving it to repreſent that only. In many parts of his writings it is manifeſtly uſed to ſignify Mental Improvements, in the proper ſenſe of the phraſe; nor is there any thing ſaid of it here, which will not in one degree or another hold true of theſe, when under right direction; beſides, in

fact, the cultivation of thoſe powers to every valuable purpoſe, is unqueſtionably a duty which we owe to their author. That the exhortation is addreſſed by our inſpired writer to a male ſcholar, whom in the manner of eaſtern teachers he calls his ſon, makes no eſſential difference in the ſpirit of his doctrine, as I hope will appear from the ſequel.

The degree of thoſe Intellectual Accompliſhments which your ſex ſhould aim at, I pretend not to determine. That muſt depend on the capacities, opportunities, and encouragements, which you ſeverally enjoy. With regard to all theſe however, this may be ſaid in general, that they are better, and more than many of you ſeem ſolicitous to improve.

As to the firſt indeed, I ſcruple not to declare my opinion, that Nature appears to have formed the faculties of your ſex for the moſt part with leſs vigour than

thoſe of ours; obſerving the ſame diſtinction here, as in the more delicate frame of your bodies. Exceptions we readily admit, and ſuch as do the individuals great honour in thoſe particular walks of excellence, wherein they have been diſtinguiſhed. But you yourſelves, I think, will allow that war, commerce, politics, exerciſes of ſtrength and dexterity, abſtract philoſophy, and all the abſtruſer ſciences, are moſt properly the province of men. I am ſure thoſe maſculine women, that would plead for your ſharing any part of this province equally with us, do not underſtand your true intereſts. There is an influence, there is an empire which belongs to you, and which I wiſh you ever to poſſeſs: I mean that which has the heart for its object, and is ſecured by meekneſs and modeſty, by ſoft attraction and virtuous love.

But now I muſt add, that your power in this way will receive a large acceſſion

from the culture of your minds, in the more elegant and poliſhed branches of knowledge. When I ſay ſo, I would by no means inſinuate, that you are not capable of the judicious and the ſolid, in ſuch proportion as is ſuited to your deſtination in life. This, I apprehend, does not require reaſoning or accuracy, ſo much as obſervation and diſcernment. Your buſineſs chiefly is to read Men, in order to make yourſelves agreeable and uſeful. It is not the argumentative but the ſentimental talents, which give you that inſight and thoſe openings into the human heart, that lead to your principal ends as Women. Nevertheleſs, in this ſtudy you may derive great aſſiſtance from books. Without them, in effect, your progreſs here will be partial and confined. Neither are you to attach yourſelves wholly to this ſtudy, important as it is, and grateful as you may find it. Whatever kinds of reading may contribute to

your general improvement and ſatisfaction, as reaſonable beings deſigned for ſociety, virtue, and religion, will deſerve your attentive regard. Suffer me to enter a little into the detail. And

Firſt, I would obſerve that Hiſtory, in which I include Biography and Memoirs, ought to employ a conſiderable ſhare of your leiſure. Thoſe pictures which it exhibits, of the paſſions operating in real life and genuine characters; of virtues to be imitated, and of vices to be ſhunned; of the effects of both on ſociety and individuals; of the mutability of human affairs; of the conduct of divine providence; of the great conſequences that often ariſe from little events; of the weakneſs of power, and the wanderings of prudence, in mortal men; with the ſudden, unexpected, and frequently unaccountable revolutions, that daſh triumphant wickedneſs, or diſappoint preſump-

tuous hope;—the pictures, I ſay, which Hiſtory exhibits of all theſe, have been ever reckoned by the beſt judges among the richeſt ſources of inſtruction and entertainment.

On both accounts, we would alſo recommend books of Voyages and Travels; a favourite ſtudy of the celebrated Mr. Locke. How amuſing to curioſity! How enlarging to our proſpects of mankind! How conducive to cure the contracted prepoſſeſſions of national pride, and withal to inſpire gratitude for the peculiar bleſſings beſtowed upon our country; to excite on one ſide pity towards the many millions of human beings left by myſterious heaven in ignorance and barbarity, and to beget on the other admiration of the virtues and abilities diſplayed by numbers of theſe under all the diſadvantages that tend to darken and overwhelm them.

Here too we would mention Geography, as closely connected with both the former; as often useful in conversation; and in which a competent skill may be acquired with little application, but much amusement.

These several studies, to which may be added the principal facts, or great outlines of Astronomy, are beautiful; and they are improving. Some of them present the most interesting scenes; all contain the most pleasing discoveries. They open and enlarge the mind; they dilate and humanize the heart; they remind us that we are citizens of the universe; they show us how small the part that we fill in the immense orb of being. Amidst the amplitude of such contemplations, superfluous trifles shrink away; wealth and grandeur "hide their diminished "heads;" a generous ambition rises in the thoughtful mind, to approve itself to

the all-inſpecting eye of Him to whom none of his works are indifferent, but to whom thoſe only can be acceptable, that, under the uncertainty and imperfection of ſublunary things, ſeek their ſecurity, happineſs, and glory, in doing well.

Permit me to aſk, whence it proceeds that ſtudies like theſe are neglected by the generality of your ſex? Is it becauſe they are not calculated to inflame the fancy, and flatter the paſſions; or becauſe to reliſh them to purpoſe, requires ſome degree of ſolidity and judgment?—But did not the preacher ſay, that there were women who are no way deficient in theſe latter qualities? He did, and therefore pleaſes himſelf with the hope, that the hints now offered may imprint conviction on ſuch, where there has been an omiſſion, and encourage perſeverance where there has not.

As to works of imagination, it is allowed on all hands, that the female mind is diſpoſed to be peculiarly fond of them; and ſurely when blended with inſtruction, ſo as to be rendered more immediately ſubſervient to it, they have a particular claim to your attention. In this view, we muſt not forget to recommend Fables, Viſions, Allegories, and ſuch like compoſitions, where Fancy ſports under the controul of Reaſon; Dramatic Writings alſo, where truth of character and purity of thought are preſerved; (of theſe laſt how inconſiderable the number!) Poetry of all kinds, where a ſtrict regard is paid to decorum, but chiefly of the ſublimer forms, where Nature, Virtue, Religion, are painted and embelliſhed with all the beauty of a chaſte yet elevated imagination.—What a field is here opened within the reach, and adapted to the turn of female faculties! What a profuſion of intellectual ornament is ſpread before you, for

memory to collect, and for reflexion to work upon! How many ſprightly, delightful, and lofty ideas do here paſs before the mental eye, all dreſſed in the brighteſt colours! How ſtrangely inexcuſable muſt thoſe be, who complain at any time of want of amuſement, when the genius and invention of every illuminated age have taken ſuch happy pains to ſupply the nobleſt!

I ſay nothing now of Novels and Romances, having had occaſion to ſpeak of them ſo largely in a former diſcourſe. But I muſt not omit to recommend thoſe admirable productions of the preſent century, which turn principally on the two great hinges of ſentiment and character; joining deſcription to precept, and preſenting in particular the moſt animated ſketches of modern manners, where the likeneſs is caught warm from life; while the powers of fancy, wit, and judgment, combine to expoſe vice and folly, to en-

force reformation, and in ſhort but ſpirited eſſays to convey the rules of domeſtic wiſdom and daily conduct. I need not here name the Spectator, or thoſe who have followed him with various ſucceſs in the ſame track; many of them ingenious, ſome of them maſterly writers. How much are both ſexes indebted to their elegant pens, for a ſpecies of inſtruction better fitted perhaps than moſt others of human device, to delight and improve at the ſame moment; ſuch is its extent, its diverſity, its familiarity, its eaſe, its playful manner, its immediate reference to ſcenes and circumſtances with which we are every day converſant!

Works of this kind are peculiarly calculated to allure the lively and the gay, who are not yet delivered over to licentiouſneſs. Hardly indeed will girls, for inſtance, who mean no ill, but whoſe fancies are all alive and reſtleſs, ſubmit to have their underſtandings attired at Wiſ-

dom's glaſs; if lovely forms and ſmiling images be not often reflected from thence, to detain the eye, and captivate the heart. In reality, none of you, my dear hearers, can be too well acquainted with thoſe approved maſters of life, thoſe able teachers of decorum, thoſe ſingularly ſucceſsful painters of truth and morality. Let me adviſe you to dwell on their pictures, to imbibe their ſentiments, to repleniſh your minds with that inexhauſted fund of ſtories and examples which they have furniſhed. You cannot fail of improving under ſuch tutors. They too will provide you with a touch-ſtone by which to judge of other writings, and while you are ſearching "for knowledge "as for hid treaſures," to ſeparate between the pure ore and the alloy.

I ſhould not on this occaſion do juſtice to your ſex, if I did not ſay, that ſuch books as thoſe laſt mentioned are, in a particular degree, proportioned to the ſcope

of your capacities. Of this I am certain, that amongſt women of ſenſe I have diſcovered an uncommon penetration in what relates to characters, an uncommon dexterity in hitting them off through their ſeveral ſpecific diſtinctions, and even nicer diſcriminations, together with a race of fancy, and a fund of what may be ſtrictly termed Sentiment, or a pathetic manner of thinking, which I have not ſo frequently met with in men. It ſhould ſeem that Nature, by her liberality to the female mind in theſe reſpects, has ſeen fit to compenſate what has been judged a defect in point of depth and force; and a real defect, I believe, it is, if eſtimated abſolutely. If eſtimated with a due regard to the deſign and formation of the ſex, it ought to be conſidered as no defect at all.

I have already hinted, that to men and women the Almighty has allotted very different provinces, on the filling of which with ſuitable kinds of ability and excel-

lence depends, under his conduct, the proper perfection and welfare of each. In all I have ſaid therefore, or may yet ſay, concerning Female Accompliſhments, I would be ſtill underſtood as recommending what is refined in ſtudy, and uſeful in the milder modes of life; not what is profound in the former, or of no material advantage in the latter. This hinders not however, but that thoſe ladies, whom Nature, not confining herſelf to her cuſtomary operations, has endowed with any ſignal ſtrength of genius, may, if favoured alſo by their ſituation, give way to that original bent, by proſecuting ſeverer ſtudies to every prudent length. I ſay, to every Prudent length. For ſhould they puſh their application ſo far as to hurt their more tender health, to hinder thoſe family duties for which the ſex are chiefly intended, or to impair thoſe ſofter graces that give them their higheſt luſtre; nothing, I think, can be more apparent than that, in ſuch caſes, they would re-

linquiſh their juſt ſphere, for one much leſs amiable, and much leſs beneficial. But neither from this, nor from what was advanced immediately before, does it follow, that, in what relates to the acquiſitions of the mind, women in general may not purſue ſtudies that are ſolid, as well as entertaining; which leads me to add,

In the next place, that the moſt obvious branches both of Natural and Moral Philoſophy ſhould engage ſome portion of your time. That they are ſo ſeldom, and ſo ſlightly thought of, you muſt allow me to ſay, is a melancholy reflexion. Does Creation, through her infinitely extended, and infinitely diverſified ſcenery, diſplay innumerable wonders? Have theſe been traced with ſkill and accuracy, by many learned, and many laborious hands? Are they laid open to you, and almoſt preſſed upon you, from every quarter? For of Natural Philoſophy I conſider Natural

Hiſtory as a part.—And can ye with a giddy eye turn away from this glorious ſpectacle, to gaze on the meaneſt ornament of beauty, or the ſillieſt pageant of vanity; thus poorly, not to ſay impiouſly, proſtituting that admiration which ought to be conſecrated chiefly to the works of your all-perfect Creator?

Are the great and eternal obligations of Conſcience, the maxims of a wiſe and worthy behaviour, the duties you owe to the Supreme of Beings, to your fellow-creatures, and yourſelves; the rules neceſſary for the government of your own minds in particular, or for the management of thoſe that may be hereafter committed to your care; are theſe mighty conſiderations, unfolded and enforced as they have been with equal clearneſs and eloquence by various writers—are theſe, I ſay, matters of ſo little concern with you, that the buſineſs of contriving ſome petty circumſtance of dreſs, or the care of

ſettling ſome fooliſh party of pleaſure, ſhall be preferred in almoſt every caſe of competition?

Here, I muſt confeſs, it is difficult to repreſs the riſings of indignation. Here I cannot deny, but the feelings of contempt, mixed with thoſe of compaſſion, are in ſome danger of baniſhing the favourable ideas we entertain of your ſex, when ſeen in happier points of light.—For ſhame, Ladies, let not this reproach reſt on you any longer. Haſten to vindicate your reputation from the infamy of impertinence and nonſenſe. Be ambitious to demonſtrate, by the moſt ſubſtantial proofs, that you are capable of better things than the placing of a ribbon, or adjuſting an head-dreſs, than the glittering in an aſſembly-room, or prattling at a tea-table. Be all ardour to emulate thoſe excellent ones of your ſex, who, without affecting to deſpiſe any thing that is innocently female, diſcover in their

converſation among their friends, a mind devoted to wiſdom, and ennobled by knowledge.

The duty and advantage of reading the Scriptures, with a few books of the moſt ſerious and devotional ſtrain, I will take another occaſion to conſider.—But, I think, I hear you exclaiming that, though God has given you the capacities of intellectual improvement, men have denied you the Opportunities of it. Let us therefore proceed to examine how this matter ſtands, which was

Our ſecond point. If your complaint be well founded, you are certainly objects of pity, inſtead of blame. If the men, jealous of dominion, do really ſeek to depreſs the women by keeping them in a ſtate of ignorance, they are ſurely guilty of equal cruelty and meanneſs. But though the complaint be a very common one, and very popular with your ſex, I

muſt take the liberty of ſaying, that it appears to me without any foundation adequate to the bitterneſs with which it has been made, or to the keenneſs with which it has been propagated.

That your minds are often much neglected at home, that they are neglected perhaps yet more at many Boarding-ſchools, we readily admit, and heartily regret. But are you nevertheleſs deſirous of knowledge? Then, what ſhould hinder you from attaining it? Is there any law or ſtatute by which you are prohibited, under ſevere pains and penalties, to read or to think, if you be ſo minded? Books you have, or may have, on every ſubject that is proper for you. This is not a country where theſe are ſcarce; where Friendſhip, if permitted, will not ſupply, or where Benevolence, if aſked, will not lend them. You will be pleaſed to remember too, that the price of one expenſive gown, or of one ſhining toy, will at any time

furniſh a little library of the beſt authors. Nor does it appear, that you are at a loſs to find as many plays and novels as the moſt inſatiable avidity can devour. But in fact there are few young ladies, who are not tolerably provided with books uſeful as well as amuſing; and in thoſe who are not under the neceſſity of earning their bread, it is both an idle and unthankful pretence, to plead that they wánt either opportunity or leiſure for any one ſtudy befitting their ſex.

Not to ſpeak of the time that with ſo much propriety they might, and that, for ſo many reaſons, they ought to redeem from endleſs viſitings and other follies; what is there to prevent their reading alternately to one another, when cuſtom or conveniency engages them at work together? Such an exerciſe would not only enlarge the ſtock of ideas in each individual, but alſo preſent materials on which their minds might operate, with an

energy quickened by mutual exertion. "As iron ſharpeneth iron, ſo doth the "face of a woman her friend." You, my fair pupils, cannot be offended, that to ſuit the quotation to the argument, I ſhould here read Woman for Man. How ſmoothly have I ſeen thoſe hours ſteal away, which were thus employed in a little ring of intelligent females, all ſweetly ſolicitous to improve and be improved by each other!

By this means too may be acquired a very valuable and pleaſing accompliſhment, that of reading well; and to this cauſe, I preſume, it is to be aſcribed, at leaſt in part, that there are not a few women who poſſeſs it in no contemptible degree, and that there are ſome who read delightfully. It is likewiſe probably, in ſome meaſure, owing to that fine feeling of nature and of ſentiment, which may be ſuppoſed to reſult from the delicacy of their organs. If, in the exerciſe I ſpeak

of, they are often deficient where force and vehemence are requiſite, to that very delicacy it is obvious to impute it; and alſo perhaps to their running too commonly into a monotony, which their teachers have not taken ſufficient pains to correct.

Having touched on this head, I will take leave to remark by the way, that nothing, as I apprehend, can be more erroneous than to begin the ſtudy of what may be termed the Art of Reading, with poetry chiefly. For by the flow and harmony of the numbers, a learner is carried inſenſibly into the repetition of thoſe muſical tones, that chance to ſeize the ear with particular delight; from which the voice, once got into the ſame ſtrain, cannot without a ſtruggle perſuade itſelf to break away: a principal ſource of the evil of monotony, where it has not been contracted by bad example, and where the ſenſe of an author is underſtood or

attended to. Where it is not, the proper emphaſis cannot be expected.

Now to prevent or remedy this prevailing evil, the moſt likely method, I conceive, would be to begin with frequently reading aloud thoſe productions in proſe of which the ſtyle is plain and eaſy, ſuch as unadorned Narrative, ſhort Stories, Familiar Epiſtles; but principally thoſe that approach neareſt to the language of converſation, ſuch as Dialogues, and the beſt Dramatic Writings; mixing for a conſiderable time nothing that is verſified, and endeavouring to ſupport the voice with firmneſs and ſimplicity, till you have formed a habit of ſo doing. Then by ſlow and almoſt imperceptible progreſſion, you ſhould advance to what is more varied, rhetorical, and raiſed; ſuch as Allegories, Orations, Moral and Religious Diſcourſes, and Eſſays of the pathetic kind, together with the moſt beautiful and elevated parts of Holy Writ;

keeping to theſe, till your voice has acquired flexibility, expreſſion, and energy. After repeated and patient efforts in this way, you may proceed with ſucceſs to reading and reciting pieces of poetry, in different ſtyles; ſetting out with thoſe where there is leaſt, and riſing gradually to thoſe where there is moſt of the tender, the impaſſioned, and the ſublime. Need I add, that all this ſhould be practiſed in the frequent hearing, and under the kind animadverſion, of an experienced judge?

But perhaps you think the practice too laborious and troubleſome. Do ye? Go, thou trifler, and be aſhamed of thy folly. —To neglect the ſtudy of thy native Engliſh, the ſkilful uſe of which, joined to ſentiment and knowledge, would render thy converſation charming; and yet contentedly to puzzle thy ſilly head with learning a little imperfect French, which it is a hundred to one if ever thou ſhalt

have occaſion to uſe—how prepoſterous and futile! To the language laſt named I am no enemy: I only blame its occupying ſo large a place in the female education of this country. For women of rank the faſhion has made it neceſſary. But what can be more ridiculous than to ſee our city girls, not excepting the daughters of plain tradeſmen and honeſt mechanics, taught for years together, at great expence, a ſmattering of that which ſoon after they leave the Boarding-ſchool is generally forgotten; while they are left ignorant of the ſuperior beauties and juſt pronunciation of their mother-tongue?

I mentioned the exerciſe of Reciting verſes. With relation to this, I would only ſay, that I do not wiſh a young woman to indulge it in any company, that is not very private and choſen indeed; how much ſoever it is to be deſired, that ſhe ſhould ſtore her memory

with ſome of the moſt ſelect ſentiments, and ſtriking deſcriptions, from the beſt writers both in verſe and proſe.

On this laſt particular I am led to obſerve, that, for a diſengaged hour, there can be few occupations of greater entertainment or utility, than that of imprinting on the mind thoſe paſſages from any good author, which happen to pleaſe and affect more than ordinary; either by repeating them often at the time, till they are got by heart, or by writing them down, or ſometimes by doing both. The advantages of ſuch a practice are ſufficiently apparent. Would it be one of the leaſt, think ye, that the attention of her who was thus employed, would be often turned from viewing and admiring her perſon or dreſs in the mirror, to the contemplation of Truth and Virtue, and fixing their fair and venerable image in her ſoul?

Beſide the ſeveral opportunities of mental culture now enumerated, I muſt not forget to add, that in all probability there are few young women who are not, or who may not be, acquainted with ſome perſons of both ſexes, endowed alike with worth and capacity, that would take the higheſt pleaſure, by their converſation and counſel, to aid them in the purſuit of knowledge; which brings me to conſider,

In the laſt place, your complaints of want of Encouragement to that purſuit. Who are they then that ſeek to diſcourage you? I have read of fooliſh mothers, that would not ſuffer their daughters to read, leſt they ſhould dim the luſtre of their eyes, or ſpoil the bloom of their complexions. But I have never met with one, that ſeriouſly carried her folly ſo far. On the other hand, I have known parents not a few, who, though they had no taſte for knowledge themſelves,

would yet ſpeak with the utmoſt ſatisfaction of a girl that was fond of her books.

But perhaps my little friend is afraid, leſt the men ſhould ſuſpect her of being what the world ſtyles in deriſion a Learned Lady. Indeed? Is this then a character ſo very eaſily acquired, that you are in danger of it the moment you emerge from the depth of ignorance, and begin to think and ſpeak like a reaſonable being? You are over haſty in your apprehenſion. A Learned Lady is by no means a creature that we run the riſk of being often ſhocked with. For my own part, I have never ſtrictly ſpeaking ſeen ſuch a one; and when at any time I have met with what approached to that character, I muſt profeſs, I found nothing to excite terror. But poſſibly you mean a ſmatterer in learning. There, indeed, I join with you in wiſhing you may never incur the imputation.

That men are frighted at Female pedantry, is very certain. A woman that affects to diſpute, to decide, to dictate on every ſubject; that watches or makes opportunities of throwing out ſcraps of literature, or ſhreds of philoſophy, in every company; that engroſſes the converſation, as if ſhe alone were qualified to entertain; that betrays, in ſhort, a boundleſs intemperance of tongue, together with an inextinguiſhable paſſion for ſhining by the ſplendor of her ſuppoſed talents; ſuch a woman is truly inſufferable. At firſt, perhaps, ſhe may be conſidered merely as an object of ridicule; but ſhe ſoon grows into an object of averſion. Be aſſured however that, where a character ſo unnatural appears, it is not the effect of too much knowledge, but of too little. The deep river flows on with a noble ſtillneſs, while the ſhallow ſtream runs babbling along. Suſpicious of her own deficiency, the Pedant we deſcribe ſuſpects leſt you ſhould diſcover it; but in-

ſtead of learning caution from that conſciouſneſs, ſhe ſtrives to dazzle you with the little ſhe does know: Or elſe, what is more probable, elated with that which to her circumſcribed view appears great, ſhe cannot reſtrain herſelf from diſplaying it on all occaſions; when farther progreſs, and higher ground, would have taught her modeſty, by ſhowing her immenſe regions of truth yet untravelled, of which ſhe had no conception before.

In fact, we find that the beſt ſcholars of either ſex are the leaſt oſtentatious. It will ever be ſo, where erudition is accompanied with judgment, and matured by reflexion. Take care to preſerve ſober ſenſe, and unaſſuming manners: far from giving diſguſt by literary attainments to any perſon whoſe regard is of moment, you will give pleaſure to every thinking man and woman of your acquaintance. I am even inclined to believe that, when in converſation you claim no kind

of pre-eminence, but inſtead of pretending to teach are willing to learn, inſtead of courting applauſe are ready to confer it, inſtead of proudly directing are content quietly to follow the current of diſcourſe, every creature living will be delighted with your deportment, will liſten with attention, and even deference, to one who has thus learnt, that the nobleſt improvement of ſuperior knowledge is ſuperior humility.

Now and then indeed there may be an invidious female, who cannot bear to ſee herſelf outdone. But that is a circumſtance, which will only add to your exaltation; while every one elſe will be tempted, for the ſake of mortifying her, to pay the more reſpect to you. Be this as it may, the notion that letters are apt to generate ſelf-conceit, becauſe it cannot be denied that the abuſe of them has often done ſo, will in thoſe of the leaſt candour or diſcernment ſerve to heighten eſteem

for her, who conſiders an excellent underſtanding as only next in value to an excellent temper. If on any occaſion it ſhould happen, that the fooliſh or the worthleſs of one ſex, or of the other, are prejudiced againſt a young woman for diſcovering, though without parade, a cultivated mind, what then? Is not the ſingle plaudit of a real judge ſufficient to outweigh a whole theatre of others?

But you will aſk, Do we not often ſee handſome idiots complimented and careſſed by thoſe men from whom better things might be expected; while the moſt accompliſhed women in the ſame company ſhall be over-looked, if deſtitute of perſonal charms? The fact cannot be diſſembled, and far be it from me to juſtify ſuch partiality. There is in beauty a magic, which certainly does enchant for a time the generality of beholders: But this will by no means excuſe the injuſtice of neglecting merit in thoſe who want that

advantage. Let it be remembered however, that the triumph of their rivals is commonly, like that of the wicked, ſhort. The ſpell on which it is founded is ſoon broke. Men at leaſt of any ſignificance, are ſeldom long in recovering their ſenſes. The admiration raiſed by "a ſet of fea-"tures, or the tincture of a ſkin," is often by the witleſſneſs of the poſſeſſor thrown down in an inſtant. The witchcraft of a fair outſide is always diſpelled by familiarity. Nothing can detain affection or fix eſteem, but that kind of beauty which depends not on fleſh and blood. The leaſt degree of underſtanding will be diſguſted at petulance, caprice, or nonſenſe, even in the faireſt form. External allurements are continually loſing; internal attractions are continually gaining. A beautiful character "is "as the morning light, that ſhineth more "and more unto the perfect day." Senſe, ſpirit, ſweetneſs, are immortal. All beſide "withers like the graſs." The

power of a face to pleaſe, or indeed to diſpleaſe, is diminiſhed every time it is ſeen. When appetite does not predominate, and appetite cannot predominate always, the ſoul will ſeek a ſoul; it will refuſe to be ſatisfied with any thing leſs. If it find none, in vain ſhall the brighteſt eye ſparkle, in vain ſhall the ſofteſt ſmile entice. But if a mind appear, and, wherever it reſides, a mind will appear, it is recognized, admired, and embraced; even though the eye ſhould poſſeſs no luſtre, and ſmiles ſhould at the moment be baniſhed by ſorrow.

" Mind, mind alone, bear witneſs earth and heaven,
" The living fountain in itſelf contains
" Of beauteous and ſublime! Here hand in hand
" Sit paramount the Graces———"

I cannot conclude this diſcourſe, without taking ſo fair an opportunity of addreſſing myſelf to ſuch of the men as, by

directing their praiſes of young women wholly or chiefly to an outward appearance, turn the attention and ſolicitude of the little idols ſo ſtrongly that way, as often to occaſion the neglect of thoſe inward perfections which can alone give them value. Have you forgotten, Sirs, that what they ſee you admire, and hear you applaud, they will be induced to think moſt worthy of admiration and applauſe; and that on it of courſe they will beſtow their whole or their chief care? If you, who ought to aſſiſt their judgments, and animate their reſolutions, in what relates to the conduct of life, be accuſtomed to pay your main homage to their perſons, their perſons they likewiſe will adore. Beauty with them will conſtitute Merit; and every other endowment will be employed as a handmaid to dreſs that, if not as a pandar to ſell it. Accordingly I fear, that to your ſcore muſt be charged many errors of the ſex, often leſs juſtly imputed to them. Thoſe errors, I am ſure,

it would become you to prevent, or to correct at the ſource, by pointing out to them what, in your wiſer hours, you want and wiſh them to be; and what, when they are, will not fail to captivate love, to command veneration, and to add permanence to both.

Conſider, I beſeech you, how honourable it will be for you, inſtead of corrupting the fair, to mend them; inſtead of perverting their ideas, to lead their taſte to knowledge and elegance, to worth and delicacy, to humility and meekneſs; things, which in your inmoſt ſouls you cannot but prize, whenever you meet with them in an amiable woman, and of which you are ſecretly convinced the abſence cannot be compenſated by any advantages of form or feature, any decorations of faſhion or ſhow. How much nobler the power to ſave, than the power to deſtroy! How much ſweeter the praiſe

of being eſteemed men of virtue and ſentiment, the friends and patrons of the ſex, advocates for their true intereſt, and zealous to promote it, than that of being looked upon as ſmooth-tongued courtiers, or good-natured triflers! To flatter a giddy girl into good humour, or even tenderneſs, by telling her perpetually how handſome or how fine ſhe is, requires no capacity. Every empty fellow, every frivolous dangler, every wretch of a paraſite can do the ſame. But to engage the eſteem of a woman of principle and diſcernment, to preſerve that eſteem, and even to inſure in her breaſt a ſilent teſtimony, that you have contributed to eſtabliſh this principle, and to improve this diſcernment—is triumph indeed! Thoſe coxcombs that in truth make no diſtinction, but yet would perſuade every young thing they ſee, that her face, her ſhape, her dreſs, her air, ſurpaſs thoſe of all her ſex; and after throwing her into

ecſtaſies of ſelf-complacence go away and laugh to their companions—are a deteſtable race.

Concerning many of you, my friends, I hope better things. Nor do I mean by aught I have ſaid, rigidly to preclude every degree of compliment in converſation with the fair ſex. I am for commending with moderation, what is commendable; for acknowledging with prudence, what is pleaſing. Young minds ought to be encouraged. In every young mind there is ſomething good. An agreeable appearance is certainly engaging. Truth will never deny it: courteſy will readily own it. But then under the ſhelter of kind approbation, ſalutary counſel may be admitted. Wiſdom may be found a welcome gueſt, when introduced by affection—I was going to ſay, that vanity may be ſucceſsfully turned againſt itſelf. But why ſhould the love of honeſt praiſe be deemed vanity? Even tell your female

friends, that you do eſteem them for whatever in their characters is eſtimable. Tell them without exaggeration, but generouſly at the ſame time, what that is. Deſcribe with complacence the qualities and accompliſhments, which you have ever held moſt truly attractive, which it is in their power to acquire, and which it will be their glory to poſſeſs. If they have beauty, be not afraid to add how alluring it appears, when illuminated by ſenſe, and arrayed by virtue. If they have none, remind them freely that ſenſe and virtue have often borne away the palm from the fineſt figure that ever Flattery deified, if deſtitute of thoſe living and laſting graces.

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END OF VOLUME I.